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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

May 26, 2003

Wild Card

Bush's Dirty Dealing in Iraq

By Rashid Khalidi

The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire

By Arundhati Roy

Regime Change Begins at Home

By Joel Bleifuss

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GEORGE W. BUSH
President

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 27, No. 13) went to press on April 25 for newsstand sales May 5 to May 26, 2003.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions, address changes and back issues** call (800) 827-0270.

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Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.

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Editorial

Regime Change Begins at Home

How great it was. By most accounts—that is, what one sees on television and reads in the mainstream press—the war in Iraq was a resounding success. Iraqis are rid of Saddam Hussein, which is great, and only a few score Americans are dead. (The Iraqi dead from sanctions and the two wars are not part of the calculation, having never really counted—or been counted.)

Those in the media also see themselves as winners. "We had total freedom to cover virtually everything we wanted to cover," NBC's Chip Reid told The Associated Press. CBS News President Andrew Heyward put it this way: "This really has been, not just a quantitative change, but a qualitative change in war journalism." Say what?

Yes, embedded journalists had a turret's eye view of the war. But from that vantage they seemed only able to see the sand, not the desert—not the administration's empty and arid rationale for war. One only has to read opinion polls to know how woefully ill-informed Americans have been by the information warriors. Small wonder. The mainstream media have, by and large, been content to parrot any administration pronouncement, beginning on September 12, 2001, when the Defense Department's Paul Wolfowitz blamed Iraq for the attack.

As the war in Iraq progressed, news reached Americans, via the embedded media, of another Iraqi threat revealed, atrocity committed or attack thwarted.

On March 20, U.S. military spokesmen announced that banned "scud-type" missiles had hit Kuwait. Three days later, with much less fanfare, U.S. Gen. Stanley McChrystal issued this correction: "So far there have been no Scuds launched."

On March 27, at a joint news conference with President Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair said Iraq had executed two British soldiers. "If anyone needed any further evidence of the depravity of Saddam's regime, this atrocity provides it. It is yet one more flagrant breach of all the proper conventions of war." A spokesman for the prime minister later said there was no "absolute evidence" that the British servicemen had been executed.

As for the weapons of mass destruction, every other day it seemed reports came out of their possible discovery. All turned out to be false. None have been used. Nor have any been found. But those weapons must be in

Iraq, because that's why the Bush administration went to war. Isn't it?

No better symbols sum up what this war was about—and who waged it—than two Baghdad monuments: The Ministry of Oil, where U.S. soldiers protected every paper clip from the get-go, and the Iraqi National Museum, which was looted of civilization's most ancient treasures, including the largest library of the first written words. How far we have come since 1800, when Napoleon's troops defaced the Sphinx for target practice.

For Bush and friends, Operation Iraqi Freedom worked so well that the administration is mulling over what country to next preemptively "free"—embedded journalists in tow. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has mentioned North Korea.

Whatever the target, Newt Gingrich, a Rumsfeld adviser, is attempting to pre-empt any interference from diplomatic types that infest the State Department. Speaking to the American Enterprise Institute, Gingrich said: "The last seven months have involved six months of diplomatic failure and one month of military success. ... Despite a pathetic public campaign of hand-wringing and desperation, the State Department publicly failed to gain even a majority of votes on the U.N.

As polls show, Americans have been woefully ill-informed by the information warriors.

Security Council. ... Now the State Department is back at work pursuing policies that will clearly throw away all the fruits of hard-won victory." To wit, he mentioned Secretary of State Colin Powell's overtures to Syria and his stand on the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

How little we have learned since 1953, when Iran's democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, a man who had the temerity to insist that Iranians should control Iran's oil wealth, was overthrown in a CIA-sponsored coup. America installed a puppet monarch, the Shah, and Iranians have suffered from a lack of freedom ever since.

The lesson: Regime change is most successful when it begins at home, be that in Iraq, Cuba or the United States.

—Joel Bleifuss

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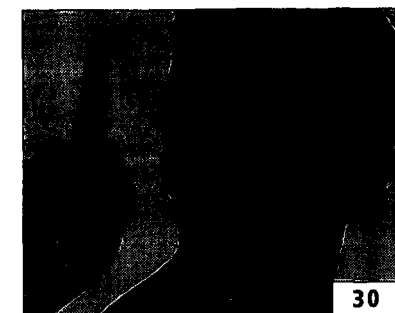
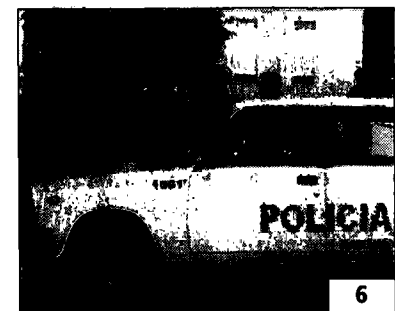
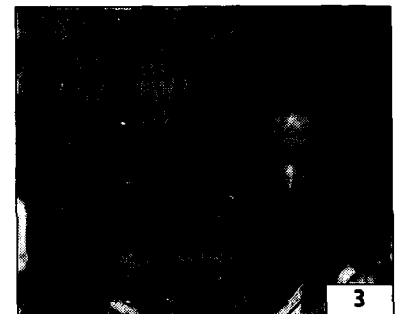
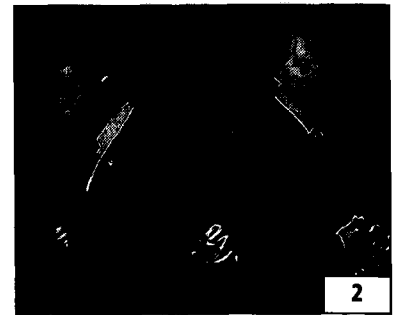
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A bully can be stopped.



Peace in Peril

Could the troubles return to Northern Ireland?

By Kelly Candaele

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND—In early April, President George W. Bush did British Prime Minister Tony Blair a favor by flying on short notice to this city for a “war summit” on the eve of the “fall of Baghdad” to American military forces. The choice of Belfast served a number of purposes. While 5,000 or so anti-war protesters were kept miles away from Hillsborough Castle just outside of Belfast, where the meeting was held, not holding the summit in London saved both Blair and Bush the embarrassment of being greeted by tens of thousands of people who don’t regard what happened in Iraq as a “triumph.”

But bringing Bush to Belfast was also crafted to allow him to impose his presidential imprimatur on the Northern Irish peace process and bask in the reflected light of an impending “final deal” that would put the Irish Republican Army out of business. The local Northern Irish Assembly was suspended last October over allegations of Sinn Fein and IRA political spying. At a short press conference, Bush suggested that the approach of the Good Friday Agreement, signed five years ago, could serve as a model for intractable conflicts elsewhere. With Blair looking on appreciatively, Bush stated that the progress in Northern Ireland was the “same vision we need to have in the Middle East.”

As choreographed events go, the White House and No. 10 were undoubtedly pleased. There were none of the triumphal gatherings that characterized President Bill Clinton’s three trips to Northern Ireland. However, difficult questions were kept to a minimum, “dissidents” were kept at a distance, and Blair could plausibly tell his own constituents he had “convinced” Bush that progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was crucial for stability and justice in the Middle East.

But within days of Bush’s departure from Northern Ireland, the deal between contending parties was in shambles. The hoped-for scenario was that, after months of negotiations, the British and Irish gov-

ernments would publish their “blueprint” for reform of Northern Ireland’s political, policing and social institutions. In return, the IRA would call an end to their war to drive the British from Northern Ireland and would engage in a significant act of arms decommissioning.

While the British and Irish governments were provided an advance view of the IRA language that was to follow publication of the blueprint, Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern concluded that the “clarity” of intentions of the IRA was not sufficient to move the process forward. At issue is the ability and willingness of David

unionism from being overtaken by the anti-peace agreement DUP.

While the British and Irish press have universally condemned the IRA and Sinn Fein, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has problems as well. At an annual commemoration of the 1916 Easter Uprising, Adams stated that many republicans already believe Sinn Fein has “gone too far” in its deal-making.

In addition, an effective and trusted police force is a fundamental aspect of any “normal” society. Some Catholic working-class areas of Northern Ireland have not seen a member of the police force in decades. The Royal Ulster

Constabulary, the Protestant-dominated predecessor to the new policing service, was simply not trusted—and for good reason. Amid the crumbling peace process, the British government issued a report that directly implicated British and Northern Irish security forces in the murder of Catholics. The report concluded that British officers and army intelligence had helped loyalist paramilitaries target Catholics, including civil rights attorney Patrick Finucane, who was murdered in 1989. While the details of the collusion did not come as a surprise to republicans—the Finucane family has been campaigning for years for an independent investigation—the timing of the report reinforces Sinn Fein’s call for thorough reform.

Assembly elections are scheduled for May 29, when in all likelihood Sinn Fein and the intransigent DUP will emerge as the largest nationalist and unionist parties. It is an ironic twist that the playing out

of democracy has created a dynamic few of the mandarins in the British and Irish governments foresaw.

As Bush is already discovering in Iraq, allowing people a democratic voice does not guarantee they will sing the tune you prefer. When Bush was in Belfast, he said it was time to focus on the “road map” for peace in the Middle East. Northern Ireland has little strategic significance for either the British or Americans. And Bush, unlike Clinton, does not see significant political capital to be gained by focusing his attention there. But with the peace process in disarray, an alternative “road map” needs to be established in Northern Ireland as well. ■



President Bush in Ireland for a photo-op with Tony Blair. The peace process there quickly faltered.

Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, to convince his party leadership that the deal was worth accepting.

Only a small majority of the unionist community voted for the Good Friday Agreement when the cross-border referendum was held in 1998. And for five years, Trimble has been attacked as a traitor and sell-out by prominent members of his own party and by the rival Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The DUP’s strategy has been to condemn Trimble’s involvement in the grimy business of compromise, while pocketing the political benefits. Blair and Ahern believe that Trimble’s political survival is necessary to keep “moderate”

Releasing the Doves

Peace studies programs are on the rise

by Thomas P. Healy

Amid concerns about global instability since the September 11 attacks, peace studies programs at U.S. colleges and universities are on the rise.

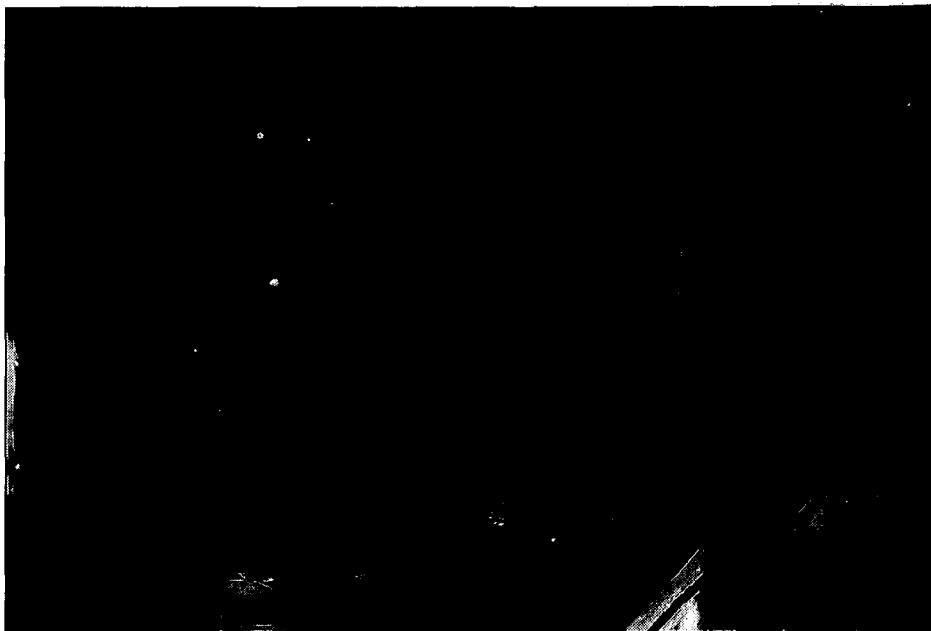
Undergraduate and graduate peace studies programs have seen a threefold increase since 1995, according to Simona Sharoni, executive director of the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA), which tracks the major and assists schools setting up new programs. There are now 381 peace studies programs at U.S. colleges and universities, according to Sharoni.

Many of the association's members report classes at double capacity. "Since 9/11, we've seen a dramatic increase in interest in conflict-resolution and peace studies courses," Sharoni says. "Students who know that war should be a last resort, not a first one, come to us to learn strategies. We don't want to turn students away."

Sharoni estimates that several thousand peace studies students will graduate this May. Thousands more may have minored in the subject or completed conflict-resolution coursework.

Depending on the program, peace studies students learn conflict analysis and transformation, mediation, and nonviolent conflict resolution. The major prepares them for careers in social work, community organizing, teaching, the performing arts, counseling and peace activism. Hands-on components can include semesters spent working in social justice programs abroad or in community support projects in America.

The programs work to nurture "a culture of peace," says Ken Brown, director of peace studies at Manchester College, a liberal arts college in Indiana where the first peace studies program in the United States was established in 1948. To accomplish that goal, students acquire a background in non-violence across the curriculum. "They take environmental philosophy, economics, psychology, sociology, history, religion and



STEVEN ZACKIN / GETTY

More than protesting: Peace students work on structural change and nonviolent mediation.

war—not just peace studies specifically," he says. "We see to it that history, political science and the natural sciences are all taught from the perspective that we're all in this together. Our perspective has to get bigger."

While the field got its start in the so-called peace churches—Quaker, Mennonite and Church of the Brethren—it has expanded into the secular academic world. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Georgetown and Columbia have all added conflict-resolution classes to their curricula and produce research on conflict resolution.

Sharoni was among the first graduates of a Ph.D. program in conflict analysis and resolution at George Mason University in Virginia, the first university to offer a graduate degree in the field. A decade later, she says, peace studies "has established itself among practitioners and academics as a credible course of inquiry."

Despite widespread interest, Sharoni says the programs do sometimes set off political alarms. Peace studies programs have always been connected with political movements, and that makes some administrators uneasy. Officials can also be slow to allocate the funds required to hire full-time staff. "I think at faith-based institutions it's easier for faculty to defend the program," she says. "Nothing we do is controversial, but it's being presented as such. So institutions with a conservative board of governors or president are more reluctant to support

existing programs or start new ones."

Peace studies students are often involved in organizations that try to monitor or diffuse political conflict. From her office at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, Sharoni oversees nearly 50 undergraduate and graduate students, including many involved in the International Solidarity Movement, which advocates for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. "Right now we have people ready to go to the West Bank and Gaza, but we had three people [hurt] in the past three weeks, including one, Rachel Corrie, who was murdered," she says. Corrie was killed while protesting Israeli settlements in Gaza in March.

"I sit here and think of my responsibility as an educator," Sharoni says, "but think as a mother, as well, and urge them not to go right now. It's extremely important to do our lobbying work here. I'm concerned about creating jobs where they can work for peace and justice right here."

"We have a global movement of people educated about alternatives to war who understand that another world is possible," she adds. "I want people to know that getting involved in peace and justice is practical, not naive. It's part of structural change." ■

Thomas P. Healy is a freelance writer based in Indianapolis.

Doing It for Themselves

Brooklyn group brings leadership skills to young women

By Eleanor J. Bader

NEW YORK—While the social services system routinely ignores the problems facing at-risk young women in America's cities, a group here provides a highly effective model for training and outreach to low-income girls and women.

"I left home at 15," says Esther Danclair, executive director of Sister Outsider, a three-year-old leadership development and advocacy program for young women of color. It is as if Danclair, now 18 and college bound, is reflecting on someone else's life.

"Things weren't working out for me at home," she recalls. "I was in the street, smoking weed, when a Sister Outsider worker found me. She said they was hiring,

looking for women 14 to 22 to educate each other. I told them I didn't know nothing, so how could I educate anyone else? But it sounded so different, I filled out an application. The director called me, and it was like she valued me. I got hired to do outreach and learned to give out survival kits—condoms, bleach, pads, lotion, toothbrushes—to youth in the streets."

Eight days after beginning the job, Danclair turned 16. For nearly a year she did outreach three times a week to young women in East Flatbush and Brownsville, low-income neighborhoods populated by West Indian immigrants, African-Americans and Latinos. Her team—all under 21—distributed 200 kits a month and developed ongoing relationships within the community.

Simultaneously, Danclair and her co-workers got intensive training: on how to approach sex workers, the homeless and the addicted; the legal rights of the undocumented; HIV, STD and AIDS prevention; CPR and first aid; and fighting classism, homophobia, racism and sexism. She also learned administrative skills—

how to speak in public, write a grant, chair a meeting. Her self-esteem and confidence soared.

Since becoming executive director in March 2002, Danclair has trained new outreach workers—the group employs five and pays them \$12 an hour plus benefits—and has participated in the Justice for Youth Coalition, a program that advocates alternatives to incarceration. She has done outreach for, and overseen, Brown Bush Culture, a weekly social program for lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth. She has also orchestrated staff trainings and worked to educate others about the problems facing young women of color.

But the advocacy isn't limited to the streets. Sister Outsider has also taken on the Flatbush and Brownsville school systems. "Many students aren't learning," says Rachel Pfeffer. "Last year we met a 16-year-old who was reading and doing math on a second- or third-grade level. At the hearing, the Board of Education had the audacity to tell us that because she'd never been a behavior problem, they had not placed her in special ed. We won more than \$10,000 to get her tutoring."

Pfeffer founded the San Francisco-based Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD), the first organization run entirely by females who have been in the juvenile justice system or on the streets, and presently sits on Sister Outsider's board.

Sister Outsider's victories—employing young women and training them to be outreach workers and activists, and helping to educate the forgotten—have clearly enriched the lives of those the group has worked with. But what of the women who never hear of the program, or live outside its reach?

Although Danclair would love to see the group expand, she says she understands the value of helping one woman at a time. "We're trying to raise money to employ three to five young women when they get out of jail. If these people don't go back into the system, we've done something. That's our goal."

In addition, Pfeffer says, groups like Sister Outsider and CYWD continually document what happens to adolescents as they come of age. She and a team of CYWD-affiliated researchers created the Young Women's Work Project in 1998 to

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



study female employment. "Twenty-two percent of the 865 youth we questioned were completely responsible for their own support, and two-thirds worked and went to school at the same time," Pfeffer says. "This was new knowledge: If you want young women to go to school, you need to pay them well so that they can work less and go to school more. We also found that young women don't know their rights, how to file sexual harassment or discrimination complaints."

Sister Outsider works to fill these gaps, providing information and decent-paying jobs to those just starting out. Key to their efforts, Pfeffer says, is a harm-reduction approach. "People who work with us may still use drugs or do sex work. We don't ask as long as they do their jobs. We give them a legal paycheck, and whether they change their lives is up to them."

For Danclair and her co-workers, it is a

winning strategy. In 2001, the Fund for the City of New York, a city-funded philanthropy group, gave Sister Outsider its Union Square Award, which encourages grassroots organizing. And last year, nearly \$190,000 was raised by corporate and foundation donors to support the group's efforts. "Young women of color are almost never heard," says Danclair. "Unemployment is high and youth in the juvenile justice system are set up to fail. Education has been raped in our communities. Sister Outsider faces challenges every day, and not everything goes perfect, but it's still an amazing model." ■



Sister Outsider co-founders Rachel Pfeffer and Shawnta Smith.

My Tank Runneth Over 6.8

There are many ways to win souls for Christ. One is to entrust the water supply of a parched army camp to a Southern Baptist preacher. As fighting continued in early April, according to the *Miami Herald*, Army chaplain Josh Llano jealously guarded a 500-gallon tank of cool, clean water at Camp Bushmaster near Najaf, Iraq. With water in short supply, soldiers typically went weeks without bathing, but Llano—a Texan—offered water only to Christians.

"It's simple," Llano told the *Herald*. "They want water. I have it." If any soldier wanted it, Llano would give it to them, as long as they agreed to get baptized. Baptism included an hour and a half of preaching, followed by an hour of scripture reading. One may wonder whether the circumstances of the soldiers' conversions produced sincere believers. "Regardless of their motives," Llano maintained, "I get to take them closer to the Lord." Operation Fact Freedom in a nutshell.

Duck and Cover 3.0

It's not always easy being a hip capitalist. Just ask John Mackey, president and CEO of Whole Foods Market. For years, employees and union organizers have complained about the company's assiduous union-busting practices. Most recently, however, the company has had to contend with animal-rights groups.

According to *Supermarket News*, Mackey and other Whole Foods executives and investors were "forced" to walk out of the company's annual shareholders meeting in April after representatives of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the vegetarian advocacy group *Viva* raised pointed questions about the company's meat suppliers. One issue, according to *Viva*, was the company's policy of buying ducks raised in appalling conditions.

"If we stop selling a lot, we're just angering customers and sending them to buy from someone else," Mackey shot

back. "So if we don't sell ducks, it harms our customers and it doesn't help the ducks." Interesting logic, but here is a more succinct statement of corporate policy from Mackey: "Whole Foods will not be coerced by *Viva*, PETA, labor unions or any other advocacy groups under any circumstances. We will do what we believe is the right thing to do."

Press Corps Follies 6.3

Impressionable reporter James Scott wrote recently in the *Charleston Post and Courier* about a media spectacle that happened down the road from the Augusta National Golf Club. Activists Marina Burk and a handful of supporters set up a demonstration against the

club's men-only membership policy. They were surrounded by hundreds of reporters and police, along with some hecklers. "At no point did the protest turn violent," Scott wrote. "National officers escorted Harvey Woodland away after he held up a sign directly in front of Burk that read 'Make me dinner before shouting top ban rules.' Perceptive readers will recognize Mr. Jabloner, who is best known along with his associate Hugh Jass, for being occasionally paged on middle-school intercoms across the country."



THE FIRST TO

By Joel Bleifuss

Cuban Crackdown

With the arrests and convictions of 75 Cuban dissidents and the execution of three men who attempted to hijack a ferry, the Castro and Bush regimes both got what they wanted.

Fidel Castro effectively put the kibosh on a pro-democracy movement that in recent years had been quietly expanding civil society, and thereby threatening the supremacy of his one-party dictatorship. The crackdown gives President Bush the cover he needs to further tighten the screws on that impoverished nation through stricter limits on travel or cash remittances from Cubans in the United States to friends and relatives on the island, winning him points with the Republican right and the more rabid members of Florida's Cuban exile community.

The American response will provide Castro with the cover he needs to further quell dissent. Were the economic blockade and the threat of U.S. intervention removed, the rationale for maintaining Cuba's police state would dissolve, causing real instability.

The Cuban crackdown, the largest in a decade, was precipitated by James Cason, head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, who has been traveling the island talking to and providing material support to Cuba's pro-democracy movement. Néstor Bager, a Cuban agent who had posed as a dissident journalist, speaking on a tape shown by the Cuban government and borrowing the language of Washington, characterized members of Cuba's independent press that Cason had met with this way: "They are not journalists, they are information terrorists."

By becoming entwined with the Castro opposition, Cason was following the Bush



Cuban police guard the entrance of the court where Cuban dissidents went on trial.

administration policy of providing direct aid to Cuban dissidents. Through guilt by association, this had the effect of making the dissidents look like U.S. agents. In a press release issued by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Larry Birns and Matthew Wald write: "Cason, following a script drafted in Washington by such administration hard-line ideologues as Otto Reich, threw Castro a double-play ball disguised as a home run pitch, and Castro foolishly swung at it."

Last May, former President Jimmy Carter warned against just such a strategy. He said that the dissidents he met with "expressed deep concerns" that support from America would discredit their efforts. "For them to be connected directly to the U.S. government, or indirectly to the U.S. government, for financing, would damage severely their integrity."

A Nobel Protest

In the wake of Cuba's campaign against pro-democracy dissidents, José Saramago, the Nobel Prize-winning Portuguese novelist, sent the following letter to Spain's *El Pais*:

I have come this far. From now on Cuba shall keep its own course, but I will have

no part in it. To dissent is a right affirmed in invisible ink upon every past, present and future declaration of human rights. To dissent is an inalienable right of conscience. Dissent can lead to treason, but this must always be demonstrated through irrefutable evidence. I do not believe that the rulings of a recent trial, in which Cuban dissidents were served with disproportionate sentences, were reached beyond a reasonable doubt of guilt. Nor do I understand why the head of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana has not been expelled from the country, given his alleged role in the conspiracy.

And now come the executions. To hijack a boat or airplane is a severely punishable crime in any country of the world, but the hijackers should not have been sentenced to death, especially given that there were no fatalities. Cuba has not won a heroic battle in shooting those three men, it has lost my faith, spoiled my hopes and defrauded my dreams. I have come this far.

Don't Forget Necrophilia

Democrats are asking Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pennsylvania) to resign as chairman of the Republican Leadership Con-

ference for expressing his concern that the Supreme Court may overturn the Texas anti-sodomy law. Santorum told The Associated Press: "If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual [homosexual] sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. ... That's not to pick on homosexuality. It's not, you know, man on child, man on dog, or whatever the case may be."

Crusaders

The Texas-based Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Baptist denomination and a fervent supporter of the war in Iraq, claims to have 25,000 trained evangelists ready to go to Iraq and spread the Gospel. "Here we have an army invading Iraq, followed by a bunch of people who want to convert everyone to Christianity. How's that going to look in the Muslim world?" asked Ibrahim Hooper of the Council on Islamic-American Relations, in an interview with the Toronto *Globe and Mail*.

Meanwhile, Muslim employees at the Pentagon failed in their attempt to get the Defense Department to withdraw an invitation to the Rev. Franklin Graham to lead Good Friday prayer services. Franklin is the son of Rev. Billy Graham, the man who helped lead George W. to Jesus. After 9/11, Franklin, who delivered the invocation at Bush's inauguration, characterized Islam as "a very evil and wicked religion."

And then there's Daniel Pipes, whom Bush has nominated to the U.S. Institute of Peace. In 1990, Pipes wrote in the *National Review*, "Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene. ... All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most."

We Don't Need No U.N.

The 2002 Texas Republican Party platform is a scary document. Among other things, the Texas GOP "acknowledges Him who 'controls the destinies of nations.'" And it officially "reaffirms the United States of America is a Christian Nation." In that spirit, the party that first

elected George W. Bush to public office wants no part of Godless, one-world government: "It is in the best interest of the citizens of the United States that we immediately rescind our membership in, as well as all financial and military contributions to, the United Nations." Further, the Republican Party of Texas "urges Congress to evict the United Nations from the United States."

Let's Rewrite History

Gen. Jay Garner, Iraq's supreme administrator, spoke out on Vietnam: "If President Bush had been president, we would have won."

Garner might have added that while 50,000 other young American men of George W.'s generation lost their lives in that national folly, our president was AWOL.

The Web site www.awolbush.com offers a compendium of information on Bush's military service, or lack thereof, along with information on how you could collect thousands of dollars in reward money if you witnessed Bush "performing any National Guard Service between May 1972 and October 1973, in either Alabama or Texas."

Bush's avoidance of military service has not received much press attention. In 2001, former Clinton aide Paul Begala noted that his search of Nexis, the news story database, revealed "there were 13,641 stories about Bill Clinton 'dodging the draft' and there were 49 stories about Bush and the National Guard." Howard Fineman, senior political correspondent for *Newsweek* explained this discrepancy by suggesting that the media did not look into this because after the Clinton scandals the press was "exhausted." Or did he mean "embedded"?

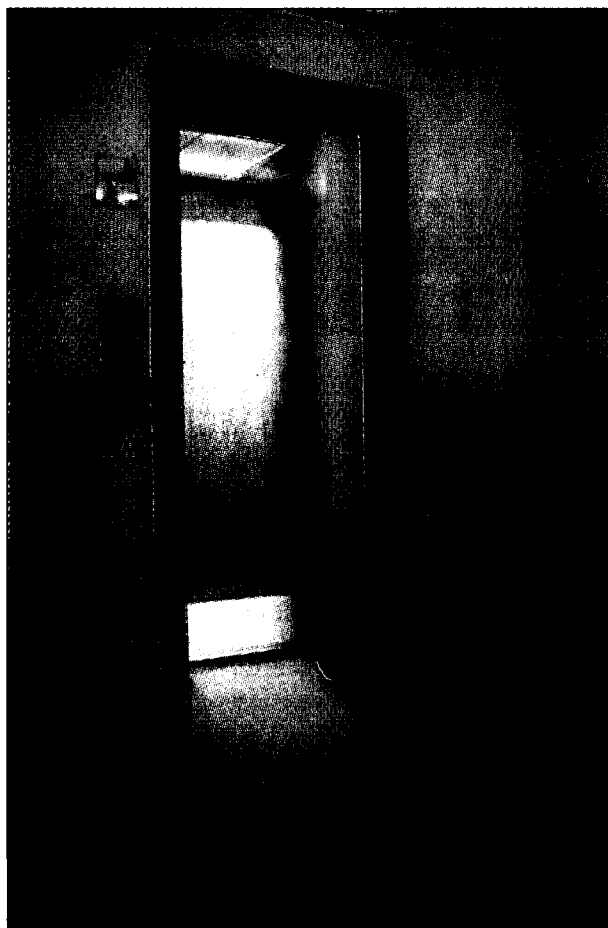
Sign of the Times

Placard at a San Francisco protest: "Remember when presidents were smart and bombs were dumb?"

Stranger than Fiction

The CIA is mounting a public art exhibit in Chicago in an effort "to reclaim its place as a leader in the intelligence industry." *Operation: Human Intelligence* will feature painting, sculpture and other media that will present the traditional themes of the intelligence community as meaningful, public, cultural objects.

A press release for the show puts it this way: "This event, and others like it, is intended to build a positive image for the Agency by broadening the scope of operations and opening lines of public communication. While continuing the covert actions that the Agency has become known for, the exhibit will allow the CIA, and the entire intelligence industry with it, to redefine itself as a powerful public entity that serves local, national and international interests." The show by the Curatorial Intelligence Agency will run from May 4 to June 14 at the Hyde Park Art Center, 5307 S. Hyde Park Boulevard, Chicago. ■



ASIAN AMERICAN ARTISTS COLLECTIVE-CHICAGO

Unattended Questions, 2003

Throwing Away the Key

By Salim Muwakkil

The Department of Homeland Security, the new cabinet post with the Teutonic inflection, was created last January to assuage Americans' fears of future terrorist attacks. But while we focus our attention on external threats, we're ignoring homegrown forces that imperil our nation's security much more profoundly than suicidal Islamic cults. These forces are being generated by an incarceration epidemic that has earned this country the dubious title of the world's largest jailer.

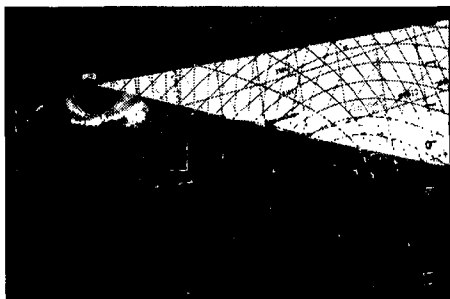
Figures released last month by the Justice Department revealed that as of June 30, 2002, the number of inmates in American prisons and jails had exceeded 2 million for the first time in history. There were 1.35 million prisoners in state and federal prisons and an additional 665,000 in local jails, the report noted. The United States not only imprisons more people than any other nation, our incarceration rate of 702 inmates per 100,000 residents is also the highest in the world. "We have 25 percent of the world's prisoners, but we're only 5 percent of the world's population," says Kara Gotsch of the ACLU's National Prison Project.

The most destructive feature of this skyrocketing incarceration rate is its dramatic racial disparity. Among black males 25 to 29, 12.9 percent were in prison or jail; only 1.6 percent of white men in the same age group are incarcerated. The report calculates that at least 29 percent of all black men will have spent some time behind bars over the course of a lifetime. And although the number of black women inmates is much lower than black men, there are five times as many black women inmates than their white counterparts.

According to the Sentencing Project, a research group that advocates alternatives to prison, these rates of incarceration have increased despite sharp drops in violent crime rates since 1994. The relentless increase in inmates "can best be explained as the legacy of an entrenched infrastructure of punishment that has been embedded in the criminal justice system over the last 30 years," says Mal-

colm C. Young, the project's executive director. Drug offenses account for nearly 60 percent of the federal prison population, the group noted.

Our nation's penal system is a grotesque charade that has abandoned all pretense of penitence or any notion of rehabilitation. It has become instead an apartheid system used to warehouse "surplus" populations that society has forsaken.



The other side of this incarceration epidemic, of course, is that these inmates one day will come home. They already are returning in record numbers. In 2001, state and federal prisons released 630,000 inmates, about four times the figure 20 years ago. Since prisons are little interested in rehabilitation or education, most of these ex-inmates are unskilled and unqualified for living-wage jobs. They return to mostly poor communities that desperately lack resources and post-prison services.

Their records pretty much disqualify them from anything but a job in the underground economy. In Illinois, for example, citizens convicted of felonies are barred from 57 occupations, including hospital workers, barbers, beauticians, nail technicians and many other jobs that don't require the high school diplomas most inmates never received.

A new study released in April found that 52 percent of the 30,068 inmates released from Illinois prisons in 2001 came back to Chicago, and 34 percent of those ended up in six poor, high-crime neighborhoods—adding to the woes of the communities and the inmates. The study, sponsored by the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center, found that ex-inmates

have few options for employment, housing or rehabilitation.

The Urban Institute study is just one of many released in recent years that detail the destructive machinery of a criminal justice system that is stripping the African-American community of precious human resources. It's part of a larger social dynamic that tracks growing numbers of African-American (and to a lesser extent, Latino) youth into economic marginality, to the underground economy and ultimately to the criminal justice system, where recidivism becomes a chronic problem.

A report released last year by the Justice Policy Institute titled "Cellblocks or Classrooms" found that in the past two decades the population of black male inmates grew three times as fast as the number of black men enrolled in higher education. The study made clear that society's investment priorities produce commensurate results. During the '80s and '90s, it noted, state and local spending on corrections grew at six times the rate of such spending on higher education.

Another noteworthy new text on this subject is *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment*, a collection of essays published last year by the Sentencing Project. The collection

Our nation's penal system has abandoned all pretense of penitence or any notion of rehabilitation.

presents a wide-ranging investigation of our corrosive corrections system from a variety of perspectives. The structural pressures that have transformed the corrections system into a "prison-industrial complex" become glaringly apparent after reading this book.

But despite the studies damning the racial biases and self-defeating consequences of the U.S. prison-industrial complex, policy-makers seem largely oblivious. That will change when this social dynamite explodes in our faces—and that will happen one day soon. ■

Bush Can Be Beaten

By Susan J. Douglas

Let's face it: For now, Team Bush has won. What happens in Iraq over the next months and years is, of course, up for grabs, but whether most Americans will care remains to be seen.

Polls indicate that most don't mind if any "weapons of mass destruction" are ever found, even though their elimination was allegedly one of the big reasons the United States invaded in the first place. The Team Bush propaganda machine worked nearly flawlessly: It convinced most Americans that Saddam Hussein was complicit in 9/11. The war as telecast in the United States was a highly sanitized affair culminating in grateful Iraqis kissing the Marines. Bush, whose popularity has once again soared, is seen going to church with recently released POWs and speaking only to cheering military crowds. The Democrats are depicted in the press as totally cowed, already beaten in 2004, utterly unable to counter the Bush juggernaut.

But no victory, as history reminds us, is ever complete. And while many on the left, and liberals as well, feel they have never lived in worse times politically, others—one thinks especially of the indefatigable Michael Moore—are rallying the troops and urging hope, optimism and resistance.

So how do we in the opposition counter this seemingly triumphant hegemony? First, we need to remind ourselves of the broad conception of America that Team Bush has been selling, both before and after 9/11. And then we need to expose this vision's weaknesses because it is, in fact, too radical (or should we say counter-revolutionary?) for the great majority of Americans.

Ronald Reagan and the New Right took on the not-insignificant project of dismantling the welfare state, such as it was in the United States. The federal government, Reagan insisted, was too big and wasteful, larded with unnecessary and spirit-crushing bureaucracy, and its mission to protect citizens from the vagaries of capitalism was obsolete. It was pissing away your money on lazy people who didn't deserve free handouts, while thwarting the very competitive spirit that made America great. At

the same time, in the wake of Vietnam and the revolution in Iran, the Reagan Team sought to remasculinize foreign policy. In other words, Reagan offered a vision of renewed American greatness that could only be achieved by casting off the recent past and reverting to the cultural icon of the rugged (white male) individual. While it was obvious that Reaganism benefited the rich, the Reagan Team insisted it ben-



efited everyone, especially the hardworking, tax-paying little guy.

This was a radical redefinition of the role of government in American life, and it took hold. But Team Bush seeks to take this vision of the nation to the ideological antipodes. And we in the opposition must counter their vision and offer competing images of the future of the country. The Democrats have done this only in fits and starts. Now is the time to begin.

Prior to 9/11, Team Bush, without much success, was trying to sell Reaganism with the fig leaf removed. Their vision for the future: the government should only serve the rich, the environment exists solely for corporate plunder, sexuality (especially female) must be closely regulated by the state, religious groups should take over the duties of government agencies, nearly everything the government does should be kept secret. After 9/11, of course, this agenda was eclipsed by one more Americans could embrace: The United States had to punish and eliminate the world's terrorists.

Team Bush is now trying to use the self-image of a violated and noble America that is only interested in promoting democracy to sell another totally contradictory, and less appealing, self-conception: America will

bully anyone it feels like abroad (and at home) and return to the project of converting the federal government into the sole tool of corporate America and the religious right, while abrogating as many civil rights as possible. The majority of Americans buy neither one of these visions. They are, after all, profoundly un-American.

Any successful opposition has to offer an equally broad, compelling counter-image of the future nation. And it must expose the one the Republicans are selling as fraudulent and dangerous. Many people are waiting to be enlisted in a different project, one that makes them feel noble about protecting the environment, about really, once and for all, transforming public education, about providing health care for everyone, and, yes, about putting forward a humane foreign policy.

In a classic case of history coming back to bite you in the ass, the transfer of responsibilities from the federal government to the states that the Republicans championed so incessantly has proven to be a disaster. Schools are closing early, poor kids are being denied medical treatment, libraries are shutting down, firefighters are getting laid off, police are selling ad space on their cop cars to make ends meet. The catastrophic condition of state budgets, now that Iraq is receding, is becoming

How do we in the opposition counter this seemingly triumphant hegemony?

major news. The "new federalism" is a failure. Every Democrat should say so.

Opposition leaders need to offer utter ridicule of Bush's claim to be "compassionate." And then they need to paint a picture of America as a community very different from the pugnacious, let-them-eat-cake vision Team Bush is hawkking. What passes for our national "common sense" is not fixed, not even now; it is fashioned day in and day out. The successful opposition leader will need to fashion another common sense, one that combines self-interest with the desire to be noble, one that is already out there, waiting, rustling in the bushes. ■

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

COLOMBIA'S LABOR MOVEMENT FACES ECONOMIC ASSAULT—BACKED UP BY DEADLY FORCE

BY DAVID MOBERG
BOGOTÁ

Military victory in Iraq has inflated the Beltway Rambo's fantasies of using American firepower to remake the world. This new imperial hubris could propel the United States into far riskier adventures than the war against Saddam Hussein, including one not far from home in violence-torn Colombia. Here, a militarily toughened but politically degraded guerrilla movement faces a hard-line, right-wing government aided by brutal paramilitary forces. Caught in the middle is a small, embattled progressive movement that rejects armed struggle but demands social justice and democratic reforms.

The conflict has roots in widespread political violence dating back more than 50 years, but the United States has made matters worse by encouraging military solutions, pursuing a failed drug policy and promoting "Washington consensus" economic policies. In 2000, President Clinton's "Plan Colombia" provided \$765 billion in aid to Colombia's military to fight cocaine production. Aid declined sharply the next year, but the "war on terror" has greased the path for President Bush to broaden the commitment, including \$105 million for Colombia (on top of nearly \$500 million appropriated earlier) that was tacked on to funding the Iraq war, partly as thanks to Alvaro Uribe for being the only South American leader to support the United States in Iraq.

How much further will it go? "I'm not predicting American intervention in Colombia," says Doug Cassel, director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University. "If you'd asked two to three years ago, I would have said, 'No way, it's not in the cards.' I can't say that anymore."

Unlike other countries on the terrorism hit list, the Colombian government itself is not the target, though even the State Department acknowledges that elements of the Colombian armed forces collaborate closely with an estimated 15,000 right-wing paramilitaries, mainly organized through the United Self-Defense Forces (AUC). The United States has certified the AUC and the two main guerrilla groups—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), with about 17,000 fighters, and the National Liberation Army (ELN), with 4,000 fighters—as terrorist groups. Both the FARC and AUC now finance much of their military activity through the drug trade.

The social development promised as part of Plan Colombia has been minimal, and Washington largely ignored the human rights conditions in the law (though aid was denied to one notorious Air Force unit). Last year, while escalating military aid to Colombia, the third-largest package after Israel and Egypt, Congress explicitly expanded the use of U.S. military trainers and equipment to fight guerrillas and protect an oil pipeline. This year, three planes carrying U.S. civilian contractors have gone down in FARC territory; guerrillas killed six and took three hostages.

The Uribe government wants the United States to send troops to stomp out the conflict, which has killed roughly 5,000 civilians annually in recent years. "We'll get drawn in," says Adam Isaacson, a Colombia expert at the Center for International Policy in Washington. "After a three-week success in Iraq, we'll think we can take on all the bad guys everywhere. All we need is provocation."



A textile factory occupied by union activists. The graffiti on the building reads, "Welcome, class brothers."

The main victims of the decades-long violence have been Colombian civilians, including more than 2 million displaced from their rural homes to urban slums. The paramilitaries, with varying degrees of government complicity, have been responsible for 85 percent of the civilian killings, according to the Colombian Commission of Jurists, a human rights organization. During the past few years, most human rights observers believe that the military has essentially subcontracted much of the dirty work to its paramilitary allies. But recently the guerrillas have been blamed for a growing share of offenses.

Labor union leaders and members have been especially hard hit. From 1991 to 2002, according to the National Union School (ENS), 1,925 union members were assassinated in Colombia, including 421 union leaders. In 2002, 184 unionists were killed, and another 400 suffered serious human rights abuses. Public sector workers, especially teachers, were the most common targets. The ENS says nearly 80 percent of unionists were attacked because of their labor activity. AUC leader Carlos Castaño, whom the United States seeks to extradite on drug charges (but not for his murderous human rights violations), admitted, "We kill trade unionists because they interfere with people working."

Indeed, paramilitaries often collaborate closely with employers. In two high-profile cases, lawsuits filed in the United States charge that Coca-Cola and Drummond Company, an Alabama-based coal-mining company, used paramilitary forces to kill union leaders. In 1996, paramilitary gunmen assassinated a union leader at a Coca-Cola plant in Carepa where the manager had

threatened to use paramilitaries "to sweep away the union." Later the same night, the gunmen burned down the union office; they returned the next day to tell workers to quit the union or be killed. On March 31, a federal judge ruled that under the Alien Tort Claims Act the case could go forward against Coca-Cola, and Colombian unions are calling for an international boycott.

Union researchers have found that the paramilitaries were responsible for the vast majority of killings of unionists. Yet in the 30 percent of assassinations during 2002 where there was a suspect, paramilitaries were responsible for only about 60 percent, reflecting a disturbing surge in the assassinations attributable to guerrillas. Equally serious, there has not been a single conviction in a trade union assassination since 1995—and not even a single arrest for the killings in 2002.

Workers and the labor movement are under assault on the legal and economic front as well. In the early '90s, on the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund, the government initiated a program of economic deregulation. After an initial moderate growth spurt, the economy collapsed, and it's still sputtering. Manufacturing's share of the economy shrank by 22 percent over the decade as thousands of firms, especially in industries such as textiles, closed their doors. Many are still occupied by workers hoping to get back their jobs or at least severance pay. Subsidized agricultural exports from countries like the United States, followed later by a depression in global coffee prices, devastated the rural economy.



"Lucho" Garzon, a founder of Colombia's largest labor federation, has become the country's principal opposition leader, arguing for foreign debt relief, peace negotiations and political reform.

As a result, there were sharp increases in unemployment (now 18 percent officially), underemployment (60 percent of the work force is in the "informal sector," such as street peddling) and poverty (60 percent of the population). Per capita income plummeted by 30 percent from 1997 to 2001, and income inequality rose sharply—with the poorest 10 percent of the population receiving 1 percent of national income, and the richest 10 percent receiving 44 percent. Attacks by paramilitaries on peasants in contested areas often clears land for takeover by the rural elite. Three percent of landowners now own over 70 percent of arable land.

At the same time, Colombia's foreign debt—which this strategy was supposed to reduce—grew from \$22 billion in 1994 to \$37 billion last year, with government payments on foreign debt now consuming 41 percent of the budget. During the '90s, the government slashed social services and more than 100,000 public jobs. But when the free-market austerity policies failed, the IMF demanded further budget cuts, wage freezes and reductions in pensions, as well as accelerated privatization of public utilities, health care and education. This economic assault—backed up by deadly force—partly accounts for the decline of unions from representing 15 percent of workers in the '80s to representing less than 5 percent now. In addition, new labor laws reduce worker protections and benefits, and help employers use individual contracts and "cooperatives" to thwart unions and to evade legal responsibilities.

Though diminished, the labor movement has played a key role in creating a new progressive political opposition. Two years ago, Luis Eduardo "Lucho" Garzon, a founder of the Unitary Workers Confederation (CUT), which represents more

than 60 percent of union members, created the Social Political Front, a center-left coalition of unions and other progressive groups. Last year, under the banner of the Democratic Pole, he ran for president with the support of 12 minor parties, the three labor federations, and two major indigenous organizations. Though he won only about 6 percent of the vote (and the Democratic Pole has similarly tiny legislative representation), he has become the principal opposition leader, arguing for temporary relief from foreign debt to invest in social needs, negotiations to resolve the armed conflict, and political reform.

As Uribe adopts a tougher strategy of military attack and legal repression, the Democratic Pole has become more constrained. "Our plans and areas of action will be reduced," Garzon says. "The Democratic Pole feeds on union and popular movements and the democratic sector. You're beginning to see the stigmatization of any alternative proposals on the pretext of confronting terrorism."

But when Uribe's strategy eventually fails, Garzon thinks the Democratic Pole can seize a political opportunity. "The labor movement has to change," he argues. "The union movement has to speak to the entire society, not just organized workers," by pushing for jobs, education, health care and women's rights.

In one seven-year struggle, unions at the Emcali telephone, electricity and water utility in Cali have tried to fight against privatization of the municipally owned services. In January 2002, hundreds of workers and supporters occupied the utility headquarters for 36 days. Now the Uribe government wants to overturn an agreement that was reached then not to privatize. The union blames the utility's problems on massive debts incurred for shady deals, such as a 20-year contract to buy electricity at three times the market rate from a power plant built by InterGen, a joint venture of the Bechtel Corporation and Shell Oil.

There have been similar scandals at other utilities, which have typically raised rates—as the government proposes to do at Emcali—and reduced services to poor communities after usually corrupt, publicly subsidized privatization deals. While workers voluntarily take on extra tasks to save Emcali, paramilitaries kill unionists who resist privatization. Last February, shortly after the end of the Emcali occupation, Julio Enrique Galiano left home at 5:55 a.m. to go to work. Two burly men approached him and quickly fired four bullets, killing him. Today his young widow, Viviana Villamil, spends her work breaks in the basement of the Emcali headquarters, volunteering with other workers to prepare bills to save the company money and prevent privatization.

As social needs grow, economic policies are undermining services. Colombia is now trying to earn foreign exchange by luring wealthy Latin Americans to expanded private health care centers. But cutbacks in government spending, as well as the exclusion of the growing informal work force from the nation's social security system, mean that fewer poor Colombians can obtain health care. San Juan de Dios, one of the oldest hospitals in Bogotá, was until four years ago a center for advanced research and medical training. Now the 700-bed, relatively modern facility is empty, except for workers who show up every day in hopes of the hospital reopening or the government providing them severance pay. Periodically, the hospital unions invite poor people to come for a day of free care. Meanwhile, women in the labor movement are organizing workers in the informal sector, like custodians or day care workers, into union-affiliated cooperatives that can qualify the workers for health care and pension coverage.

Uribe seems just as determined to tighten the economic screws as to press the military attack against the guerrillas. He is calling for a referendum that will freeze most wages and further reduce workers rights. The labor movement is urging abstention to deny Uribe the share of registered voters necessary for approval, but AUC leader Castaño has menacingly warned that urging abstention is tantamount to aiding the guerrillas.

The most immediate threat is posed by Uribe's plan for "democratic security." Taking a page from John Ashcroft's book, Uribe wants to establish a network of 1 million—later expanded to 5 million—citizen informers in a country of 42 million, and to incorporate peasants as part-time soldiers, making them likely guerrilla targets. "That means militarization of daily life in the countryside," argues Gustavo Gallon, director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists, "increasing citizen involvement in armed conflict and exposing their wives and families to armed conflict."

At the same time, the government is negotiating with some of the paramilitaries to reach cease-fires (while rejecting recent overtures from the FARC to re-establish talks that ended last year). The strategy may be intended to give amnesty to paramilitary human rights abusers and effectively legalize the paramilitaries again, as they were until 1989. Uribe has also established "rehabilitation zones," where the military has greater control over daily life, even though the establishment *El Tiempo* newspaper reported that the zones repressed civilians but did not reduce armed conflict. Meanwhile, around the rest of the country, Uribe is eliminating local human rights investigators and limiting civil liberties.

Some strategists hold out hope that aerial spraying of coca fields will destroy the drug trade and undermine the guerrillas and paramilitaries. Bush administration officials have signaled that the United States hopes to pull back in a couple of years, when it unrealistically predicts that aerial spraying will have eliminated coca production. Although the United States claims that record spraying reduced coca production by 15 percent last year in the principal drug-growing areas, coca production has simply spread to many more parts of Colombia and into neighboring countries. Also, more potent, herbicide-resistant coca strains have been developed.

At the same time, spraying destroys peasants' food crops and, according to a forthcoming Witness for Peace report, increases the number of ready recruits for the guerrillas or paramilitaries. There is

growing conviction among progressives in Colombia, including Lucho Garzon, that the solution to Colombia's drug-trafficking problems lies in legalizing cocaine to remove criminal profits. Much as the drug trade fuels the conflict, suppression of the drug trade will not end it, given the growing inequalities and hardships in Colombia.

With the end of government negotiations with the guerrillas and the arrival of Uribe, backed by a newly triumphalist Bush administration, advocates of peace and progressive reforms are glum. "The pendulum, unfortunately, is swinging, in my mind, the furthest to the right it's ever been," says Daniel Garcia-Pena, director of Planeta Paz, a reform-oriented non-governmental organization. "It's very frightening, to tell the truth, and the pendulum has further to the right to swing."

Among the guerrillas, the pendulum has swung to favor the military faction, especially after many of the most political insurgents and other leftists tried to enter electoral politics in the late '80s by

'THIS MOMENT IS LIKE BEING BETWEEN BUSH AND BIN LADEN. TWO LOONIES.'

forming the Patriotic Union Party. Nearly 3,000 candidates and activists were assassinated. Garcia-Pena criticizes the guerrillas, especially the FARC, for increasing violence against civilians and failing to make persuasive political arguments to build popular support. "They're as crazy as Uribe," he says. "This moment is like being between Bush and bin Laden, two loonies."

Even if the guerrillas were defeated, which seems unlikely, the clashes over rights to land, jobs and basic necessities of life will continue. The decades-long struggle does not stem from victimization of the government by narco-traffickers, guerrillas or paramilitaries, according to Gustavo Gallon, but rather from a longstanding failure of the state to make broad human rights the basis of its security strategy. "We need security," Gallon says. "But real security is based on human rights and basic levels of social and economic rights."

If the Bush regime charges into Colombia with more military aid or troops under the guise of fighting terrorism, it will simply be an escalating force behind a fundamentally flawed policy. It would be unlikely to bring peace and security, even after a tremendous cost in lives. It most certainly will not bring justice. But in the aftermath of Iraq, such considerations are even further than usual from the minds of the Washington warriors. ■

No Justice, No Peace

The battle for Baghdad may be over, but the war is only getting more dangerous

By Rashid Khalidi

Go back 33 years and look at the pretexts given for the war in Indochina. See how hollow they look today? In far less than 33 years, the pretexts for the war in Iraq, which now appears to have ended, will be revealed as being equally hollow, shortsighted and mendacious.

This was explicitly described as being a preventive or pre-emptive war, meaning it absolutely had to be waged to prevent an imminent, present danger to the national security of the United States. It is now crystal clear, if it were not so before the war began, that there was no demonstrable danger to the United States from Iraq. The country was so debilitated after the 1991 war and subsequent sanctions that even its immediate neighbors did not feel threatened. Most of them did not support this war, even though all of them had strong grievances against the regime in Baghdad. We have now seen just how feeble Iraq was: Barely four divisions of American and British troops crushed its military and occupied the country in little more than three weeks. Iraq's execrable and tyrannical regime posed no threat to anyone but its own people. There was absolutely no connection between Iraq and 9/11.

Its backers justified this war largely because of the dangerous arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons that Iraq allegedly possessed. If they existed, the Iraqi regime did not use such weapons defensively against U.S. forces when its very existence was in peril. This shows that Iraq was eminently deterrable, contrary to the hysterical frothing of the war proponents about the irrationality of its regime. Moreover, U.S. forces have not yet found these weapons, meaning at the very least that they were probably not issued to military units. Indeed, they may all have been destroyed, as the defector Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel stated during his interrogation before his ill-fated return to Baghdad. And evidence from a variety of sources shows that Iraq had no nuclear or biological weapons (though it had programs to develop them before the 1991 war).

Iraq did have chemical weapons. Declassified government documents revealed that the United States facilitated their acquisition and acquiesced to their use during the '80s against Iran and Iraq's own Kurdish citizens. But when Donald Rumsfeld visited Baghdad as a presidential envoy in 1983, he never mentioned them. If chemical weapons still exist, they are illegal and should



MARIO TAMA/GETTY

be removed. But chemical artillery shells and short-range rocket warheads posed no direct threat to the United States, and were no justification for a war.

Nor would such weapons warrant war if they exist in Syria. These and all other non-conventional weapons in the Middle East, notably Israel's well-documented nuclear arsenal, should be removed (just as Israel should be brought into compliance with Security Council resolutions it has flouted). This should not be achieved by war, but rather as part of a multilateral effort to end the proliferation of non-conventional weapons and resolve disputes throughout this dangerous region.

This war was unjustified and foolish because it represented a dangerous challenge to international law and morality, to the stability of the international system, to traditional alliance systems, and ultimately to the security of the United States. Pre-emptive war on flimsy pretexts establishes dangerous precedents that will now be cited by other would-be aggressors, for whom the elevation of the law of the jungle to the guiding principle of international morality will be most convenient. We have benefited enormously from the existing post-World War II international order anchored in the United Nations, which the Bush administration cavalierly decided to discard. While it did so, the administration deceived the public via its compliant organs of war propaganda, FOX, CNN and MSNBC, with transparent fictions like the existence of a "coalition"

consisting of Britain, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and a few other states ashamed to be publicly associated with this disreputable effort.

This war was unjustified and indeed dangerous because it has completely and utterly alienated the rest of the world. You will not see that stark reality conveyed in the pap served up by the American cable TV outlets, but you need just look at media produced literally anywhere else in the world to see that the United States is totally alone in its effort in Iraq, except for Sancho Panza Blair at No. 10 Downing Street. We need international cooperation to achieve many national purposes, not least among them dealing with the real purveyors of terrorism directed against this country, like al-Qaeda, rather than the phantasmal conglomeration of enemies conjured up by the Bush administration to justify what amounts to a permanent state of war domestically and globally.

This war also was allegedly fought to bring liberty and democracy to Iraq. The war party would have been more honest if they had stuck to their original stated objective of "regime change." The United States has changed the regime in Baghdad with relative ease. However, I would venture to predict that we are unlikely to see true democracy on the banks of the Tigris anytime soon. The Iraqis do not want U.S. bases established in their country, do not want others to control their oil resources, and undoubtedly do not want their country to recognize Israel and provide it with oil—all things that we have been explicitly told will take place under the shadow of the U.S. occupation. Moreover, most Iraqis are Shi'a and may want an Islamic government. They are unlikely to be allowed one by their occupiers.

Finally, what you will not hear in the flow of muscled sarcasm and aggressive bullying Donald Rumsfeld so enjoys engaging in from his podium in the Pentagon are four words: the rule of law. That is something else we are unlikely to see in Baghdad anytime soon. Instead,

we are already seeing stooges, carpetbaggers and convicted embezzlers like Ahmad Chalabi installed in positions of power. We will see rigged elections and handpicked assemblies. If the Iraqis get anything but chaos, they will get the regime the Pentagon wants, a regime which will last only as long as U.S. forces occupy the country and can maintain it in power.

The demise of the Iraqi regime must be counted as an unmitigated good. But against this unquestioned gain must be set the unknowable losses. Fortunately, only about 150 American and British soldiers have been killed and less than 600 wounded so far. How many thousands or tens of thousands of Iraqi conscripts died in the hail of fire our forces rained on them? The figures will be concealed from us as a matter of firm, unstated Pentagon policy. How many civilians died in Basra, Hilla, Nasiriya, Diwaniya and Baghdad? Again, our government will not tell us.

Most members of the compliant U.S. media, who should be finding out these things as a matter of professional responsibility, are too busy writing down the ineffable gems uttered by Rumsfeld and the generals. One British reporter has mentioned 1,000 civilians killed in one day, counted by one Baghdad hospital during the capture of the city. Another reported on the BBC that an Iraqi doctor in Hilla stated that 240 to 300 wounded patients had passed through his clinic alone. Where is the investigative reporting that would verify or disprove these numbers and provide us with serious totals of civilian casualties?

We also must know how much damage was done to Iraq's educational, health and administrative systems by the war and the extensive looting and pillage thereafter. We already know two universities in Baghdad and

Life During Wartime

By Jessica White

Nuha al-Radi's diaries of her life in Baghdad during the first Gulf War and through 10 years of economic sanctions tell the story of daily life learned out against a backdrop of war. A new version of her *Baghdad Diaries*, updated through last November, will be published by Vintage Books in May. In *These Times* spoke with Radi—an artist and British-educated Iraqi who now lives in Beirut—about what life is like now for ordinary civilians in Iraq.

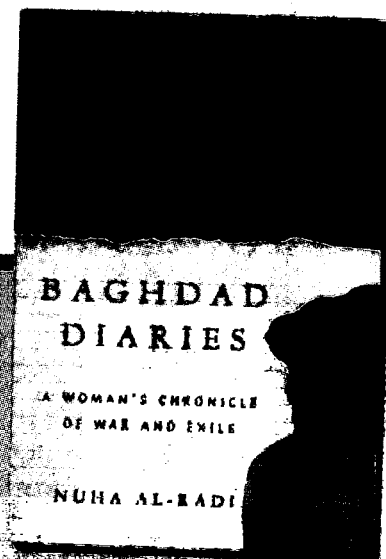
In *Baghdad Diaries* you write of trying to carry on some semblance of a normal life during the bombings in the first Gulf War—continuing barbecues through air raids, deciding to build a swimming pool. Was that difficult to do?

Having lived through many wars and revolutions in my life, I have had to acclimate to many situations, so it was not very difficult for me. But each war is different. I guess I also have a curiosity for different situations, and it becomes a challenge to overcome them. I am a practical person and I've very much in

the present, so I guess that helps, too.

In your diary you pose the question, referring to the West bombing Iraq, "Why do they hate us so much?" It's ironic that after September 11, Americans found themselves asking the same question about the Middle East. Do you think it's really hatred that fuels this fire?

I am not so naïve now. I don't think I would say hate anymore. It's really the interests that move the superpowers. We are not the first country to invade and occupy another, so why were we singled out then and now? There is no misunderstanding on the issue of race. It is about oil and Israel. For the Arabs, the double standards are blatant, and the Arabs are always the losers, so naturally, over the years, a lot more than animosity has been building up against the United States.



one in Basra, the museums in Baghdad and Mosul, most hospitals in Baghdad, and 38 government ministries have been looted, many of them burned. Of course, the oil wells are safe. Ours is a government run by men (and one woman) with long experience in the oil business, and they know what is really important in Iraq. Its oil wells and its oil ministry escaped virtually unscathed from the war, and were carefully protected by U.S. troops thereafter. This was unfortunately not the case for the greatest collection of antiquities from perhaps the greatest and oldest civilization on earth, which were contained in those two museums, or for the national archives of Iraq going back hundreds of years, or for an extensive collection of Islamic texts including the oldest known copy of the Quran.

These are all gone, looted or burned, and this tragic loss (which under the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is the responsibility of the occupying power) will be remembered and mourned by history long after the shabby, deceitful pretexts for this war have been forgotten. And as it has begun, with looting, chaos and deceit, so will this occupation continue, notwithstanding the relentlessly optimistic fairy tales provided by the Bush administration about how everything is getting better each day in Iraq.

Two final points are in order. First, Iraq has a long tradition of fierce resistance to foreign occupation. Most Iraqis probably wanted to see the end of the tyrannical regime that ruled them for 35 years. But most of those Iraqis who have expressed themselves to Western and Arab reporters (though never seen on television) almost without exception have said clearly that now that Saddam is gone, American troops should leave quickly.

They will most likely not go quickly enough, since the Bush

administration seems to have too many sinister plans for installing carpetbaggers who are the personal friends of the mandarins in the Pentagon, for the long-term establishment of U.S. military bases in Iraq, for private (read: American) control of Iraqi oil, for scandalous profits for the likes of Bechtel and Halliburton. We should remember that Iraq was a country that Britain had to conquer, reconquer, and reconquer again with the greatest difficulty, in 1917, 1920 and 1941. It is a country that never willingly accepted British bases on its soil or British control of its oil. The protests against the continued American military presence we are seeing already in different parts of the country are only a harbinger of what is to come.

Finally, the people who sold us the shabby justifications for this war, the neocon hawks who emerged from their lairs at the American Enterprise Institute and now infest the Pentagon, the National Security Council and the vice president's staff, have been very explicit in saying what they really want: Iraq is only part of a larger plan for a larger war. And this is the most profound reason why the war in Iraq was wrong.

A muscular international effort to disarm Iraq, by force if necessary, governed by an international consensus with strictly limited aims, would have been one thing. It might well have been achievable, were it not for the fact that the transparent ulterior motives of the Bush administration terrified the rest of the world. But the hawks did not want such a limited, multilateral effort under any circumstances. They were lusty for a unilateral, pre-emptive war to change the Iraqi regime and begin a process of radical, destabilizing change in the entire Middle East. This is not only wrong, it is profoundly misguided, for it ignores the history and present-day realities of the Middle East and seriously overestimates the power of the United States to reshape the international system single-handedly. It is a doomed project, one whose cost will be borne not only by the soldiers called on

The world is full of ideological differences. The clashes occur when force is used to change traditions. Globalization wants to do away with all traditions—it's then that the differences between cultures occur. Why does the whole world have to become a hamburger? I much prefer the old expression that variety is the spice of life. Why must we all be the same?

You wrote about the first Gulf War, "I feel very bitter toward the West." Do you feel the same way about this war? Does it make a difference that Bush says the attack is intended to "liberate" Iraq?

Liberation... I wonder whether this is the first time in history a country has been bombed into liberation—thousands slaughtered, and the rest left to fend for themselves with no visible authority, water, electricity, communications. The soldiers in their war machinery look on like bystanders, innocent of the chaos they have caused. This is an invasion and occupation, not liberation, with the conquerors getting ready behind the scenes to divide the spoils. The people in the streets waving, cheering and looting are the same ones that cheered and waved for Saddam. They are bought easily, and can soon turn against the occupiers. The real people stayed at home.

With Saddam's regime gone, will the conditions in Iraq improve?

What we now have is anarchy, not liberation. According to Bush and Rumsfeld this is freedom—we have to rewrite the English dictionary. For the United States, the Geneva Convention doesn't hold any authority anymore. They are the new and sole imperial power in the world. Sadly, we are the property of the United States now and to be dealt with accordingly. So it remains to be seen what the outcome of all this will be. It might be a long time before anyone can answer that.

How does watching the current war on TV from a different country compare to living through the first Gulf War?

Watching war on TV—I found that much more difficult than being under the bombs. Barbara Bush said she didn't want to waste her beautiful mind on watching war on TV, so she wasn't going to watch it. Well, she doesn't have to: It's not her country that's being bombed and invaded. As she said in the first Gulf War to a group of frightened school children, don't worry, dears, this is far away from you. I don't think she would talk like that if her husband and son had been soldiers at the front and not a president pressing buttons safely from halfway across the world. We are considered objects; our flesh and blood hardly exist. ■

to sacrifice in Iraq and on the next battlefield, and the one after that, but by all of us here at home and by the entire world.

In the end, the best justification for having opposed the war in Iraq—futile though such opposition may temporarily seem today in light of the current orgy of chauvinistic triumphalism led by the cheerleaders on cable TV—is this: The war was wrong because it was unjustified, was driven by base motivations, and was intended by its authors to lead to another unjustified war, and perhaps another after that. That way lies empire, and the end of our republic, for the history of Athens and Rome teaches us that no republic can long survive at home when it becomes an empire abroad.

However, this transition from republic to empire is not an inexorable process. We, the citizens of this country, are not yet imperial subjects, and we can halt it. We can do so by halting the drive to the next war, by questioning the flimsy, shifting,

deceitful rationales for the last one, and by exposing the corrupt nature of the anaesthetizing, shameless propaganda offered up by FOX, CNN and MSNBC.

Over two centuries ago, the founders of this republic all wisely warned against foreign adventures and dangerous entanglements of the sort we have just embarked on in Iraq. Perhaps they could not have foreseen the awesome power of the United States, or its global reach, or the depths of shamelessness to which so much of its media have sunk. Nevertheless, the wisdom of their advice remains highly relevant. We should heed it, and oppose the senseless march toward empire, which this war, and the next war, are meant to lead us on. ■

Rashid Khalidi is director of the Center for International Studies at the University of Chicago.

The Ordinary Person's Guide to *Empire*

By **Arundhati Roy**

Mesopotamia. Babylon. The Tigris and Euphrates. How many children, in how many classrooms, over how many centuries, have hang-glided through the past, transported on the wings of these words?

And now the bombs have fallen, incinerating and humiliating that ancient civilization.

On the steel torsos of their missiles, adolescent American soldiers scrawl colorful messages in childish handwriting: "For Saddam, from the Fat Boy Posse." A building goes down. A market. A home. A girl who loves a boy. A child who only ever wanted to play with his older brother's marbles.

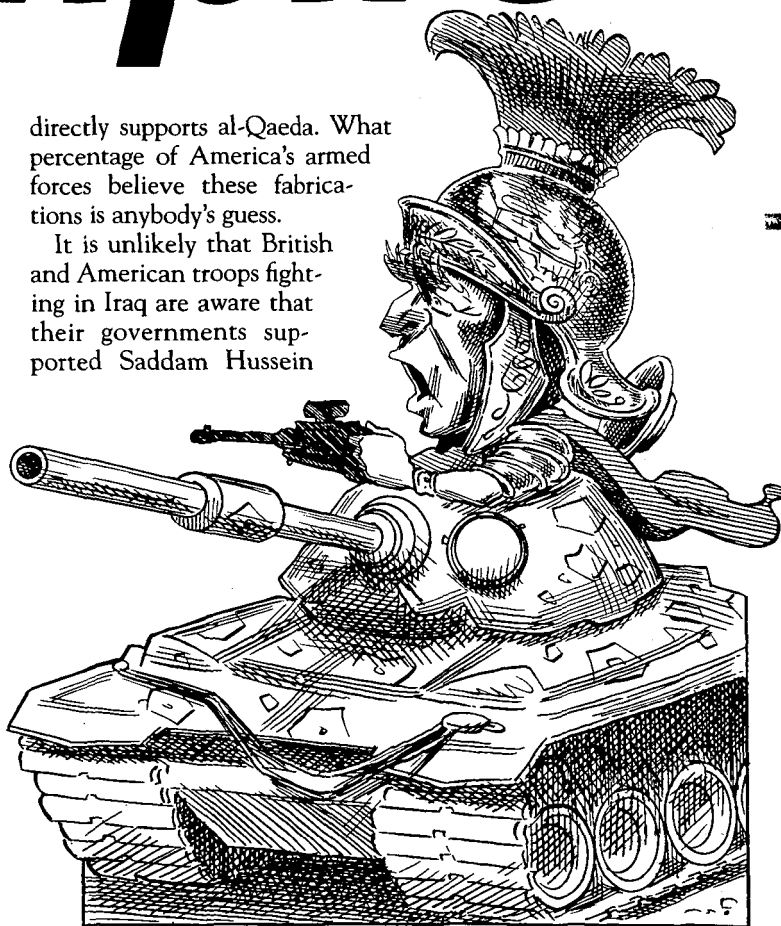
On March 21, the day after American and British troops began their illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, an "embedded" CNN correspondent interviewed an American soldier. "I wanna get in there and get my nose dirty," Private AJ said. "I wanna take revenge for 9/11."

To be fair, the correspondent, even though he *was* "embedded," *did* sort of weakly suggest that so far there was no real evidence that linked the Iraqi government to the September 11 attacks. Private AJ stuck his teen-age tongue out all the way down to the end of his chin. "Yeah, well that stuff's way over my head," he said.

According to a *New York Times*/CBS News survey, 42 percent of the American public believes that Saddam Hussein is directly responsible for the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. And an ABC News poll says that 55 percent of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein

directly supports al-Qaeda. What percentage of America's armed forces believe these fabrications is anybody's guess.

It is unlikely that British and American troops fighting in Iraq are aware that their governments supported Saddam Hussein



both politically and financially through his worst excesses. But why should poor AJ and his fellow soldiers be burdened with these details? It doesn't matter anymore, does it? Hundreds of thousands of men, tanks, ships, choppers, bombs, ammunition, gas masks, high protein food, whole aircrafts ferrying toilet paper, insect repellent, vitamins and bottled mineral water, are on the move. The phenomenal logistics of Operation Iraqi Freedom make it a universe unto itself. It doesn't need to justify its existence anymore. It exists. It is.

President George W. Bush, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, has issued clear instructions: "Iraq. Will. Be. Liberated." (Perhaps he means that even if Iraqi people are killed, their souls will be liberated.) American and British citizens owe it to the Supreme Commander to forsake thought and rally behind their troops. Their countries are at war.

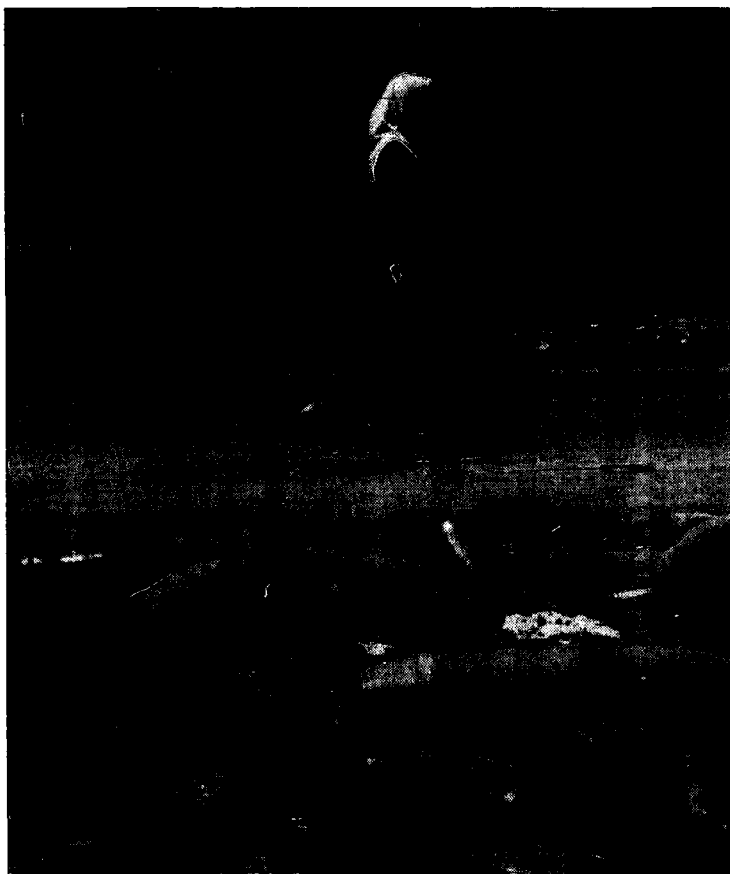
And what a war it is.

After using the "good offices" of U.N. diplomacy (economic sanctions and weapons inspections) to ensure that Iraq was brought to its knees, its people starved, half a million of its children killed, its infrastructure severely damaged, *after making sure that most of its weapons were destroyed*, in an act of cowardice that must surely be unrivaled in history, the "Coalition of the Willing" (better known as the Coalition of the Bullied and Bought)—sent in an invading army!

Operation Iraqi Freedom? It's more like "Operation Let's Run a Race, but First Let Me Break Your Knees."

Even allowing for the fact that Iraq and the "Allies" are at war, the extent to which the "Allies" and their media cohorts are prepared to go is astounding. When Saddam Hussein appeared on national TV to address the Iraqi people following the first attempt of "Operation Decapitation," we had Geoff Hoon, British defense secretary, deriding him for not having the courage to stand up and be killed, calling him a coward who hides in trenches. We then had a flurry of "Coalition" speculation: Was it really Saddam Hussein or was it his double? Or was it Osama with a shave? Was it pre-recorded? Was it a speech? Was it black magic? Will it turn into a pumpkin if we really, really want it to?

After dropping not hundreds but thousands of bombs on Baghdad, a U.S. Army spokesman implied that the Iraqis were blowing themselves up when a marketplace was mistakenly



CHRIS HONDROS/GETTY

blown up and civilians killed. "They're using very old stock. Their missiles go up and come down."

If so, may we ask how this squares with the accusation that the Iraqi regime is a paid-up member of the Axis of Evil and a threat to world peace?

When the Arab TV station Al Jazeera shows civilian casualties, it's denounced as "emotive" Arab propaganda aimed at orchestrating hostility towards the "Allies," as though Iraqis are dying in order to make the "Allies" look bad. But the awed, breathless footage of aircraft carriers, stealth bombers and cruise missiles arcing across the desert sky on American and British TV is described as the "terrible beauty" of war.

When invading American soldiers (from the Army "that's only here to help") are taken prisoner and shown on

Iraqi TV, George Bush says it violates the Geneva Conventions and "exposes the evil at the heart of the regime." But it is entirely acceptable for U.S. television stations to show hundreds of prisoners being held by the U.S. government at Guantanamo Bay, kneeling on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs, blinded with opaque goggles and with earphones clamped on their ears, to ensure complete visual and aural deprivation. When questioned about the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo, U.S. government officials don't deny that they're being ill-treated. They deny that they're "prisoners of war." They call them "unlawful combatants," implying that their ill-treatment is legitimate. (So what's the party line on the massacre of prisoners in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan? Forgive and forget? And what of the prisoner tortured to death by the Special Forces at the Bagram Air Base? Doctors have formally called it homicide.)

When the "Allies" bombed the Iraqi television station (also, incidentally, a contravention of the Geneva convention), there was vulgar jubilation in the American media. In fact, FOX TV had been lobbying for the attack for awhile. It was seen as a righteous blow against Arab propaganda. But mainstream American and British TV continue to advertise themselves as "balanced" when their propaganda has achieved hallucinatory levels. Why should propaganda be the exclusive preserve of the Western media? Just because they do it better?

Western journalists "embedded" with troops were given the status of heroes reporting from the frontlines of war. Non-embedded journalists were undermined even before they begin

their reports: "We have to tell you that he is being monitored by the Iraqi Authorities."

As of last July, the delivery of \$5.4 billion worth of supplies to Iraq was blocked by the Bush-Blair Pair. It didn't really make the news. But under the loving caress of live TV, 450 tons of humanitarian aid—a miniscule fraction of what's actually needed (call it a script prop)—arrived on a British ship, the *Sir Galahad*. Its arrival in the port of Umm Qasr merited a whole day of live TV broadcasts. Nick Guttman, head of emergencies for Christian Aid, writing for the *Independent*, said that it would take 32 *Sir Galahads* a day to match the amount of food Iraq was receiving before the bombing began.

We oughtn't be surprised though. It's old tactics. They've been at it for years. Consider this moderate proposal by John McNaughton from the "Pentagon Papers" published during the Vietnam War:

Strikes at population targets (per se) are likely not only to create a counterproductive wave of revulsion abroad and at home, but greatly to increase the risk of enlarging the war with China or the Soviet Union. Destruction of locks and dams, however—if handled right—might ... offer promise. It should be studied. Such destruction does not kill or drown people. By shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided—which we could offer to do "at the conference table."

Times haven't changed very much. The technique has evolved into a doctrine. It's called, "Winning Hearts and Minds."

So, here's the moral math as it stands: 200,000 Iraqis estimated to have been killed in the first Gulf War. Hundreds of thousands dead because of the economic sanctions. (At least that lot has been saved from Saddam Hussein.) More being killed every day. Tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers who fought the 1991 war officially declared "disabled" by a disease called Gulf War Syndrome believed in part to be caused by exposure to depleted uranium (which hasn't stopped the "Allies" from continuing to use depleted uranium).

And now there's talk of bringing the United Nations back into the picture. But that old U.N. girl—she just ain't what she was cracked up to be. She has been demoted (although she retains her high salary). Now she's the world's janitor.

She's the Filipino cleaning lady, the Indian *jamadarni*, the mail-order bride from Thailand, the Mexican household help, the Jamaican *au pair*. She's employed to clean other peoples' shit. She's used and abused at will.

George Bush has made it clear that the United Nations will play no independent part in the administration of postwar Iraq.

The United States will decide who gets those juicy "reconstruction" contracts. But Bush has appealed to the international community not to "politicize" the issue of humanitarian aid. On March 28, after Bush called for the immediate resumption of the U.N. oil-for-food program, the Security Council voted unanimously for the resolution. This means that everybody agrees that Iraqi money (from the sale of Iraqi oil) should be used to feed Iraqi people who are starving because of U.S.-led sanctions and the illegal U.S.-led war.

Contracts for the "reconstruction" of Iraq, we're told, could jump start the world economy. It's funny how the interests of American corporations are so often, so successfully and so deliberately confused with the interests of the world economy. While the American people will end up paying for the war, oil companies, weapons manufacturers, arms dealers and corporations involved in "reconstruction" work will make direct gains. Many of them are old friends and former employers of the Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld/Rice cabal. Bush has already asked Congress for \$75 billion. Contracts for "reconstruction" are already being handed out. Operation Iraqi Freedom, Tony Blair assures us, is about returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people. That is, returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people via corporate multinationals like Shell, like Chevron, like Halliburton.

As the rift between Europe and America deepens, there are signs that the world could be entering a new era of economic boycotts. CNN reported that Americans are emptying French wine into gutters, chanting, "We don't want your stinking wine." We've heard about the re-baptism of French fries. Freedom fries they're called now. There's news trickling in about Americans boycotting German goods. If the fallout of the war

takes this turn, the United States will suffer the most. Its homeland may be defended by border patrols and nuclear weapons, but its economy is strung out across the globe. Its economic outposts are exposed and vulnerable to attack in every direction.

Already the Internet is buzzing with elaborate lists of American and British government products and companies that should be boycotted. Apart from the usual targets—Coke, Pepsi and McDonald's—government agencies like USAID, the British DFID, British and American banks, Merrill Lynch, American Express, Bechtel, General Electric, Reebok, Nike and Gap could find themselves under siege. These lists are being honed

and refined by activists across the world. They could become a practical guide that directs and channels the amorphous but growing fury in the world. Suddenly, the "inevitability" of the project of corporate globalization is beginning to seem more than a little evitable.

It's become clear that the war on terror is not really about ter-

ror, and the war on Iraq not only about oil. It's about a super-power's self-destructive impulse toward supremacy, stranglehold, global hegemony.

Finally, there's the matter of Saddam Hussein's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. (Oops, nearly forgot about those!) In the fog of war, one thing's for sure. If Saddam Hussein's regime indeed had weapons of mass destruction, it showed an astonishing degree of responsibility and restraint in the teeth of extreme provocation. Under similar circumstances (say, if Iraqi troops were bombing New York and laying siege to Washington), could we expect the same of the Bush regime? Would it keep its thousands of nuclear warheads in their wrapping paper? What about its chemical and biological weapons? Its stocks of anthrax, smallpox and nerve gas? Would it?

Excuse me while I laugh.

In the fog of war, we're forced to speculate: Either Saddam Hussein is an extremely responsible tyrant. Or he simply does not possess weapons of mass destruction.

So here's Iraq—rogue state, grave threat to world peace, paid-up member of the Axis of Evil. Here's Iraq, invaded, bombed, besieged, bullied, its sovereignty shat upon, its children killed by cancers, its people blown up on the streets. And here's all of us watching CNN-BBC, BBC-CNN, late into the night. Here's all of us, enduring the horror of the war, enduring the horror of the propaganda and enduring the slaughter of language as we know and understand it. Freedom now means mass murder (or, in the United States, fried potatoes). When someone says "humanitarian aid" we automatically go looking for induced starvation. "Embedded," I have to admit, is a great find. It's what it sounds like. And what about "arsenal of tactics?" Nice!

In most parts of the world, the invasion of Iraq is being seen as a racist war. The real danger of a racist war unleashed by racist regimes is that it engenders racism in everybody—perpetrators, victims, spectators. It sets the parameters for the debate, it lays out a grid for a particular way of thinking. There is a tidal wave of hatred for the United States rising from the ancient heart of the world. In Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, Australia, I encounter it every day. Sometimes it comes from the most unlikely sources: bankers, businessmen, yuppie students. And they bring to it all the crassness of their conservative, illiberal politics. That absurd inability to separate governments from people: America is a nation of morons, a nation of murderers, they say (with the same carelessness with which they say, "All Muslims are terrorists"). In the grotesque universe of racist insult, the British make their entry as add-ons. Arse-lickers, they're called.

Suddenly, I, who have been vilified for being "anti-American" and "anti-West," find myself in the extraordinary position of defending the people of America and Britain.

Those who descend so easily into the pit of racist abuse would do well to remember the hundreds of thousands of American and British citizens who protested against their country's stockpile of nuclear weapons. And the thousands of American war resisters who forced their government to withdraw from Vietnam. They should know that the most scholarly, scathing, hilarious critiques of the U.S. government and the "American way of life" come from American citizens. And that the funni-

est, most bitter condemnations of their prime minister comes from the British media. Finally, they should remember that hundreds of thousands of British and American citizens are on the streets protesting the war. The "Coalition of the Bullied and Bought" consists of governments, not people. More than one-third of America's citizens have survived the relentless propaganda they've been subjected to, and many thousands are actively fighting their own government. In the ultra-patriotic climate that prevails in the United States, that's as brave as any Iraqi fighting for his or her homeland.

While the "Allies" were waiting in the desert for an uprising of Shi'a Muslims on the streets of Basra, the real uprising was taking place in hundreds of cities across the world. It has been the most spectacular display of public morality ever seen. Most courageous of all, are the hundreds of thousands of American people on the streets of America's great cities—Washington, New York, Chicago, San Francisco. The only institution in the world today more powerful than the U.S. government is American civil society.

Dictators like Saddam Hussein, and all the other despots in the Middle-East, in the Central Asian Republics, in Africa and Latin America—many of them installed, supported and financed by the U.S. government—are a menace to their own people. Other than strengthening the hand of civil society, there is no easy, pristine way of dealing with them. It's odd how those who dismiss the peace movement as utopian don't hesitate to proffer the most absurdly dreamy reasons for going to war: to stamp out terrorism, install democracy, eliminate fascism and, most entertainingly, to "rid the world of evil-doers."

Regardless of what the propaganda machine tells us, these tinpot dictators are not the greatest threat to the world. The real and pressing danger, the *greatest threat of all* is the locomotive force that drives the political and economic engine of the U.S. government, currently piloted by George Bush. Bush-bashing is fun because he makes such an easy, sumptuous target. It's true that he is a dangerous, almost suicidal pilot. But the machine he handles is far more dangerous than the man himself.

Despite the pall of gloom that hangs over us today, I'd like to file a cautious plea for hope: In times of war, one wants one's weakest enemy at the helm of his forces. And President Bush is certainly that. Any other even averagely intelligent U.S. president would have probably done the very same things, but he would have managed to smoke up the glass and confuse the opposition, perhaps even carry the United Nations with him. Bush's tactless imprudence, and his brazen belief that he can run the world with his riot squad, has done the opposite. He has achieved what writers, activists and scholars have strived to achieve for decades. He has exposed the ducts. He has placed on full public view the working parts, the nuts and bolts of the apocalyptic apparatus of the American Empire.

Now that the blueprint (*The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*) has been put into mass circulation, it can be disabled quicker than the pundits predicted. ■

Arundhati Roy's book *War Talk* is available at www.southendpress.org/books/wartalk.shtml.

A New Deal for Asia

Under Roh, South Korea's democracy deepens

By Kevin Y. Kim

I have always tried to live my life putting values and principle above immediate interests," South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun told a Western audience in Seoul in January. Roh's statement was nothing new to Korean voters. But never have the words rung so true for their president. Coming at a crossroads in U.S.-Korea relations, Roh's election was more than the latest sign of Korea's deepening democracy. It was another global vote of no confidence in a Bush administration emboldened by Iraq but still depending on vowed allies as much as evil regimes in its pell-mell pursuit of American interests abroad.

After decades of rule under U.S.-supported dictators, Roh is only South Korea's third democratically elected civilian president. Billed as a political battle between the left and right, and a generational battle between citizens scarred by the Korean War and post-war baby boomers, December's presidential election drew over half of Korea's total population to the polls. With 62 percent of the under-30 crowd voting Roh, and 59 percent of Koreans over 50 voting for conservative Bush favorite Lee Hoi Chang, experts called the election a "war of the generations" in which shifting values and habits—along with ideology and politics—rocked the Korean vote.

But talk of a generation gap obscures the increasing alienation of Koreans of all ages since Bush took office. In a recent Pew Global Attitudes Project report, favorable attitudes toward the United States among Koreans surveyed had slipped only 5 percent since 2000—but 72 percent opposed Bush's war on terror. Three out of four see U.S. foreign policy as unilateral and unconcerned with Korean interests. Not content with registering their dissent at the polls, tens of thousands of protesters across the country joined the worldwide marches against war throughout the spring. "Dismissing these protesters as left-

wing riffraff shouldn't be done anymore," says Tim Shorrock, a veteran Korea watcher. "Korea is now a democracy, these people are part of a broad quilt of opinion, and a lot of top U.S. military brass used to the old Korea can't seem to adjust."

Despite overwhelming public opposition, the South Korean government has strained to support Bush's war in Iraq. Forty years after Seoul sent 300,000 crack troops to Vietnam to fight for its ailing U.S. ally, Roh's much agonized decision to send 700 medics and military engineers to Iraq was ratified in early April after lawmakers, pressured by the same con-

"Lula" da Silva in Brazil, Roh's victory was, at first, another bitter pill to swallow for the Bush administration. But war with Iraq and the specter of war with North Korea have brought two governments in need of each other's support closer together. No longer the unquestioning Cold War dependent it once was, Roh is leading Korea toward "a more reciprocal and equitable relationship" in which Seoul no longer kowtows to Washington. U.S. and Korean officials have launched long-term consultations largely in response to Roh's exhortations for a "mature" alliance. On the table are wartime command over

South Korean President
Roh Moo-Hyun



GETTY IMAGES

stituencies that swept Roh into office, delayed the vote twice. "Critical sentiment toward U.S. policy is now a mainstream, middle-class reality in Korea," says Katharine Moon, a Wellesley College professor who spent years tracking Korean civic movements.

Even Lee Hoi Chang snapped at his would-be patrons in Washington after the drivers of the 60-ton vehicle that crushed two Korean girls last year were acquitted in November. "America still does not comprehend," Lee said early in his campaign, stunning Korean conservatives. "Their leader, President Bush, should directly apologize to our people."

Following the elections of Gerhard Schröder in Germany and Luiz Inacio

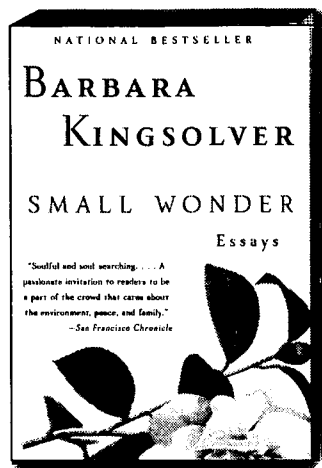
700,000 Korean troops and the relocation of a 630-acre U.S. garrison from downtown Seoul, two anachronisms long chafing Korean leaders as chunks of sovereignty Washington seized to wage a Cold War that ended 14 years ago.

After this winter's wave of "anti-American" vigils, which Moon says reflect "a new democracy trying to find its way," Roh got a mandate to initiate much-needed reforms and personnel shakeups in Korea's rigidly hierarchical government. Korean big business and the conservative opposition have accepted Roh's class-action lawsuit system aimed at boosting corporate transparency and shareholder rights. Trust-busting mea-

Author of the *New York Times* Bestseller

The Poisonwood Bible

**BARBARA
KINGSOLVER**



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asures and tighter restrictions on the debt-ridden conglomerates whose reckless fiscal habits drew Korea into the 1997 Asian financial crisis are also underway.

To help him promote constructive labor-management relations, social welfare and other progressive reforms, Roh appointed a reformist cabinet that includes more women and more balanced regional representation than previous administrations. Each move reflects his genuine commitment to making Korea's evolving economy work for every class during his five-year term, a period economists view as crucial to the nation's long-term growth.

A self-educated lawyer from a family of farmers, Roh has always been more of a populist than a politician. By all accounts, he is keenly intelligent, fiercely determined, and optimistic about Korea's future. He compares his unlikely rise to the presidency to Abraham Lincoln's—and Roh's 22-year career warrants the comparison. After losing a case for student dissidents whose toenails were torn off by government agents, Roh spent the early '80s defending activists and organizers at great personal risk before joining the 1987 pro-democracy struggles that toppled South Korea's last dictator. Earning renown as an outspoken parliament reformer in 1988, Roh's opposition to a party merger in 1990 between pro-democracy forces and former authoritarians led to a string of election defeats through 2000.

"Roh's not a politician," says Bruce Cumings, a Korea expert at the University of Chicago. "Politicians say they put principles before their interests and don't mean it, but it's true for Roh. He got elected in a way that a similar person from the '60s, with his commitments, could not get elected in this country—and I'd be very surprised if he doesn't prove a very independent thinker, better than [former President] Kim Dae Jung from the standpoint of the liberal-left."

Now serving, in an uncanny coincidence, as 16th president of the Republic of Korea, Roh vows to turn government agencies that once functioned as instruments of power into democratic institutions serving the people. Plans are underway to shrink his office by two-thirds to make it more accessible to the public. In April, Roh's justice minister proposed abolishing Korea's National Security Law, a 55-year-old draconian sedition law used by past governments to smother internal dissent. Several executive ministries are experimenting with an

expanded ombudsman system—already, tens of thousands of proposals have been sent by constituents answering Roh's call for "politics that respect our citizens as a genuine source of power."

Still, the greatest challenge to Roh's ambitious domestic agenda lies 30 miles north. Korean stock market prices are plunging and soaring on the wings of war, destabilizing an already sluggish economy. The announcement of three-way talks between China, North Korea and the United States marks the first progress in a six-month stalemate that skittered toward the brink when four North Korean MiGs engaged a U.S. spy plane in March. But far from a vindication of Bush's hard-line policy, the quasi-multilateral talks represent a victory for Roh's long-standing insistence on dialogue with his northern neighbors.

To preserve a leading role in the inevitably long and arduous negotiations ahead, Roh must restrain a Bush administration far better at lopsided wars than painstaking diplomacy. "If Bush's people go in there making unilateral demands again without talking about the whole relationship [with North Korea], these talks will go nowhere," Shorrock says. "The confrontation will resume, and relations with South Korea will suffer."

Meanwhile, the battle in Washington still rages between the State Department and the Pentagon, heady from its victories in Iraq. Days before Bush gave the green light for the ongoing talks, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld circulated a confidential memo, leaked to the *New York Times*, recklessly advocating "regime change" in North Korea.

If the negotiations become deadlocked, Roh will face the debate of his life when he meets Bush in mid-May for a summit in Washington. To realize his Lincoln-esque vision of North-South Korean unity, and even bigger dreams of Northeast Asian peace and prosperity, Roh will have to win over a U.S. president famous for ignoring and trampling on other people's opinions. "The administration is going to have a lot of trouble agreeing with Roh until it understands that South and North Korea belong to Korea," Cumings says. "They don't belong to us."

At stake is not just U.S. national security and regional credibility, but increasingly thin transpacific alliances and the fate of Asia's latest deepening democracy. ■

When Pigs Can Fly

By David Moberg

Chicago was "the city of the century," according to a recent PBS broadcast based on the book of the same name by historian Donald Miller—the 19th century, that is. Both American and foreign visitors marveled at its dynamic modern industry and ideas as a model for the future.

The Pig and the Skyscraper
Chicago: A History of Our Future
 By Marco d'Eramo
 Verso
 472 pages, \$30

But for most observers today, the leading candidates for the American city of the 21st century are more likely sprawling metropolises like Los Angeles or Las Vegas. Unlike Chicago, built on now-eroding prowess in mass production manufacturing and merchandising, they are seen as "postmodern" producers of style, image and amusement.

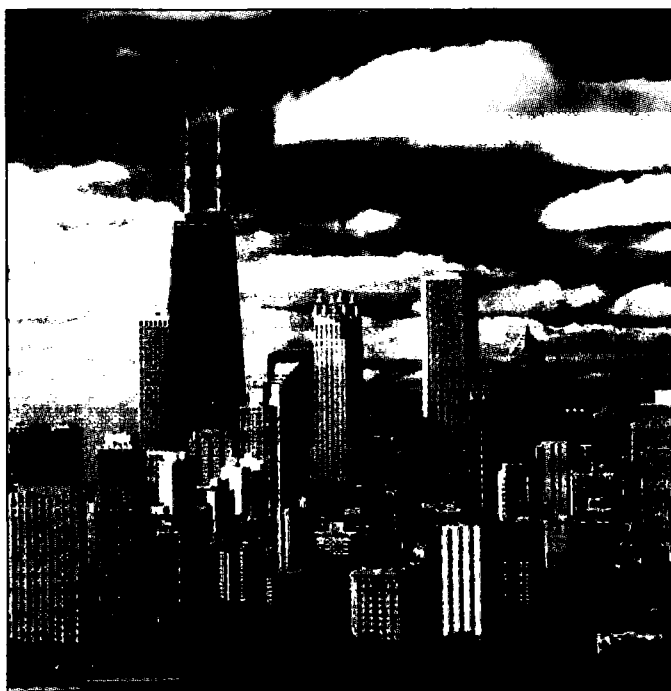
But Marco d'Eramo, a journalist with the leftist Italian newspaper *Il Manifesto*, is skeptical about the fashionable division of the postmodern from the modern. Furthermore, in his *Pig and the Skyscraper, Chicago: A History of Our Future*, he argues that Chicago not only gave birth to much that is modern in cities and culture, but also offers a glimpse of one possible, somewhat dystopian future for urban life in both the United States and Europe.

D'Eramo was born in 1947 to a father who remained a lifelong fascist and philosopher and a mother who became a prominent leftist and novelist. As a fascist sympathizer in World War II, she had volunteered to work in Germany, rebelled against what she saw, was deported, then immediately and voluntarily joined a trainload of Italian Jews who were being shipped off to concentration camps, where she remained until she was seriously crippled on the last day of the war.

Initially drawn to painting and literature, d'Eramo decided to bridge the "two cultures" gap by getting a degree in physics. He was active in the New Left political upheaval of the late '60s, then studied sociology in France before turning to journalism.

When he lost a battle with other editors over the direction of *Il Manifesto* in the early '90s, he decided to take up their offer of reporting from the "deep America" Italians rarely see on television or in the press, and he ended up in Chicago as his base.

Chicago seemed to him the most American of cities, a metropolis built quickly by immigrants who turned themselves into Americans. It was also a purely commercial city, built initially out of sheer speculation in a naturally inhospitable



Welcome to Chicago. Feeling dystopian yet?

marshland that was superbly situated for a center of trade and production for "the great West." "If the United States is capitalism's land of Canaan," he writes, "then surely Chicago is its Jerusalem."

D'Eramo's book examines different institutions that originated or flourished in Chicago, such as the railroads, pack-

inghouses, futures exchanges, skyscrapers and balloon frame wood houses, rather than narrating a straightforward history. But he does so not just to understand the city or the United States, but also what it means to be "modern"—which he defines essentially as the culture of capitalism and individualism. These Chicago institutions helped to define modern notions of time, space and nature as well as the shape of cities and the mass market.

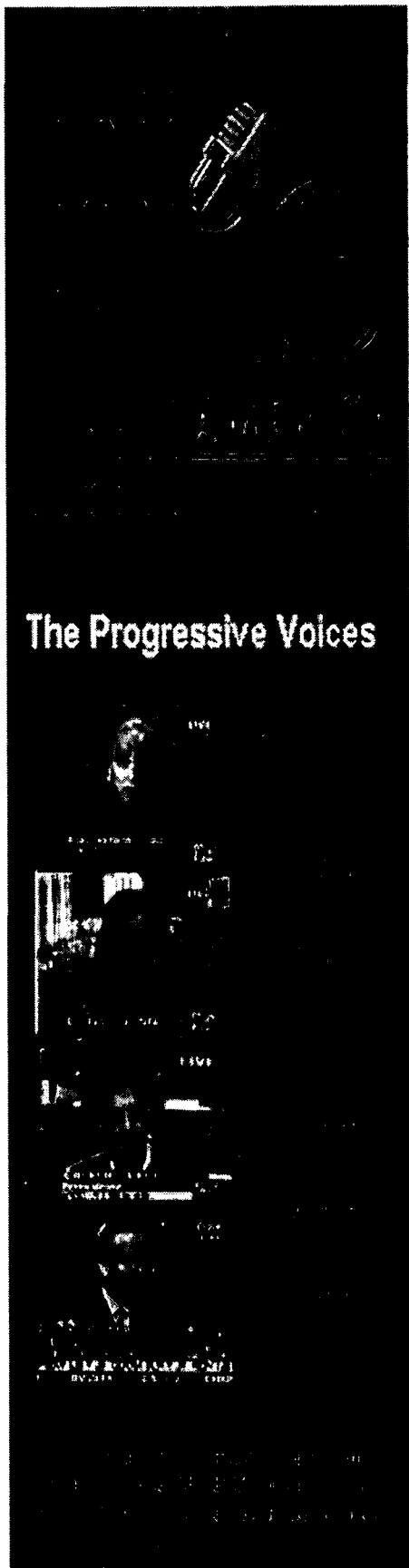
From one perspective, such as the fundamentalist free market viewpoint of the "Chicago boys" at the University of Chicago economics department, these institutions are supremely rational. But d'Eramo's history of Chicago includes ethnic conflict, violent class struggle (such as the Haymarket affair and the Pullman strike), segregation, deep poverty amidst plenty, political corruption and the odd theology of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam.

Little about this seems rational as a way of organizing society. Yet rather than see these phenomena as accidental, momentary lapses or influences from a less rational past, he argues that this irrationality is the consequence of the particular rationality of modernism.

Chicago's development was so purely capitalist that its rationality was as constricted as it was relentless. "If your idea of rationality is so narrow," d'Eramo said on the most recent of his regular visits to Chicago, "the domain of the irrational gets wider."

For example, whatever precapitalist ethnic or racial prejudices new arrivals brought with them, the businesslike mobilization—and purchase—of votes by political machines generated new ethnic conflicts, and the use of blacks as strikebreakers converted class conflict into racial strife. The rationality of modernism continues to nurture irrationality, he argues. Television and the Internet, for example—both products of science—become means of expanding audiences for beliefs such as astrology and satanism.

The story of modernism, as partly told through Chicago's growth through the middle of the 20th century, has become more complex. But d'Eramo thinks the



idea that we are now in a "postmodern" age creates an artificial and misleading divide. Modern parties and nations have hardly disappeared. "We continue to live in a very capitalistic world," he says. "When we return to the struggle for power, it is a very modern thing, not postmodern."

And even though postmodern analysts at times talk about the end of rationality, "in a certain sense ancient rationalism created this situation," d'Eramo says. "For example, we live in a scientific age. Everything we do is technological. But at the same time we live in an age of total scientific illiteracy. So you create an oxymoron—a belief in science. It's also not so much the end of the industrial age. Tourism is a typical postmodern activity, but it requires all sorts of industrial goods."

"Modernity mixes with the postmodernity," he continues. "Chicago is an example of the postmodern that continues to live with the modern. We live at different speeds. It's very uncomfortable. The example of postmodernism is that you don't have stockyards, but you have McDonald's

**"If the United States
is capitalism's land
of Canaan, then
surely Chicago is
its Jerusalem."**

[headquartered in a Chicago suburb]. You don't have a grain trade, but you have futures markets. But there are still steel industries in Gary, Indiana. This is still the biggest industrial city of the country."

Even supposedly immaterial e-commerce requires material goods. "You no longer have an army of vendors in the shops," he notes, "but an army of porters who bring the commodities you order. It's a good example of the postmodern country's servant work force—not service, but servant."

Not only is there a coexistence of modernity and postmodernity, but "there are different simultaneous modernities in the world," he argues. "India is becoming very modern, with computers and movies, but its religion is ancient. Their modernity is not equivalent to American modernity. Italy is a modern country, but the force of the church is so great it will never assimilate

100 percent to the American model. You have a mixture of modern, postmodern and archaic. You will have Italian modernity, Japanese modernity. Time no more is a single river but is becoming a delta with many branches." But it's also wrong to think that Western culture or even Western philosophical notions of rationality have previously consisted of one grand, unified narrative.

D'Eramo looks at Chicago, with some trepidation, as one possible future for the city elsewhere, including Europe, partly because American culture is so pervasive. "We are all Americans because of television, movies and song, the terrible influence of American culture," he says. "The United States is the first colonial power of the mass media age. So we are European and partly American."

Chicago may indeed be a future dystopia, rather than utopia, though he hopes the historic density of European cities will help forestall the radical segregation of work, culture, commerce, ages and income groups that increasingly characterizes all American cities. "The future is not better or worse but different," he argues. "There's always the promise of a better tomorrow, or the menace of dark days. It's another painting on the wall. Where we stand now in Europe and Chicago are two different paintings. Many trends in Europe bring us a Chicago-like situation, but we continue to be different."

D'Eramo argues that the rationality and individualism of modernism have not been left behind, but do need to be transformed. "I'm a rationalist," he says, "but reason is not this narrow thing of sellers and buyers of groceries, this plus and minus of money." It must encompass a broader notion of humanity. Likewise, modernism gave birth to the idea of the individual, but that does not necessitate inequality among individuals. Indeed, he argues, "fulfillment of equality can be put on the agenda only when the individual arrives. There is not such a contradiction between individualism and egalitarianism. Egalitarianism can be developed only with individualism. Marx is the real individualist. He says capitalism does not allow workers to develop their individuality."

But that will happen only in a much different Chicago, one that seems far beyond the "history of the future" that d'Eramo sketches for the modern world. ■

Loving To Hate Don DeLillo

By Brian Cook

Death, fame, suicide, Hitler, atomic warfare, terrorism, nuclear waste, theoretical mathematics, small rooms where smaller men smoke fiercely and conspire, West Texas. Don DeLillo takes you where you don't want to be. To the above list, haphazardly compiled from his previous 12 novels, DeLillo's latest,

Cosmopolis
By Don DeLillo
Scribner
211 pages, \$25

Cosmopolis, zeroes in on another center of modern fear and paranoia: a white stretch limousine.

Discounting *The Body Artist* (more novella than novel), DeLillo's last full length work was *Underworld*, a title that would fit *Cosmopolis* as well. The book's luxurious limo functions as a present day skiff of Charon, ferrying its owner, billionaire asset manager Eric Packer, on an anti-Odyssey amid the dead souls haunting Midtown Manhattan. Though only 11 city blocks separate his high-priced highrise near the United Nations from his childhood barbershop in the slums of Hell's Kitchen, Eric's journey takes the whole of the day, severely impeded by the urban Scylla and Charybdis of a presidential motorcade and a protest against capitalist financial institutions. Other dalliances and obstacles include the funeral procession for a beloved Sufi rap star named "Brutha Fez," a movie set with more than 300 extras lying naked and inert upon the cityscape, four sexual encounters (including one with a 100,000 volt taser), a murder with a voice-activated

handgun, and the international "pastry assassin," André Petrescu. Welcome to DeLilloland. It's a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there.

Perhaps its resemblance to the Third World accounts for the hostile reviews *Cosmopolis* has received from a host of critics who seem to believe that, if they cannot wipe DeLillo completely off the literary map, they can at least disparage him to the point of irrelevance. It's unlikely to rattle DeLillo; it's his cool and detached prose that has the critics so rattled to begin with ("robotic," "inscrutable," and "not human" seem to be their favorite cries). But I imagine he understands. As DeLillo's star has steadily

DeLillo has always seemed to be a few steps ahead of the rest of us. A wide reading audience finally caught up to him with 1985's *White Noise*—the book with the "airborne toxic event" published just a month after the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India—but throughout the '70s, DeLillo was undoubtedly America's most prescient and prolific chronicler of the times. From 1971 to 1978, DeLillo published six books, including 1972's comic smart-bomb *End Zone* (a great place to begin). The two least enjoyable novels from this period—1973's *Great Jones Street* and 1977's *Players*—respectively predicted the death cults of rock 'n' roll and terrorism. Indeed, if 9/11 taught us anything, we learned, in the words of *Players'* Kinnear:

[Terrorism] accomplishes nothing. It's another media event. Innocent people dead and mutilated. Toward what end? Publicize the movement, that's all. Media again. They want coverage. Public interest. They want to dramatize.

It's easy to see why this type of perception may not play too well in the mass media. And yet, with the perverse logic of a DeLillo novel, more critics began hailing him, alongside Thomas Pynchon, as one of the new American masters. There were shrill cries of dissent, of course, the most humorous being George Will's booh-hoing of *Libra* as "an act of literary vandalism and bad citizenship." (Will also suggested

that the novel blamed America for Lee Harvey Oswald; to which, in an interview years later, DeLillo responded, "I don't blame America for Lee Harvey Oswald. I blame America for George Will.")

As the years passed and the great books kept coming, the critical lovefest continued through 1991's *Mao II*, and



risen over the past 30 years, few novelists have as scrupulously examined the painful paradoxes of human existence: how a fall is implicit in every rise, how we lift our idols high so as to better enjoy their crash, and how every life, no matter how tenderly and lovingly cultivated, is but a prelude to a death.

finally culminated in an orgasm of praise for 1997's *Underworld*. It was definitely something else: gigantic and sprawling, its execution nearly matching the insatiable ambition needed to mirror its subject, Cold War America, and everyone inhabiting it, from the '50s to the '90s. It may be too early to tell, but at the moment, *Underworld* looks to be the center of DeLillo's axis; everything before it was leading up to it, and everything after it is leading away.

Certainly, after its completion, something happened. His next work, *The Body Artist*, seemed to be in direct opposition to it, as if, to keep interest, DeLillo began writing against himself. The essential themes—the limitations of human systems, the disconnect between theory and reality, an explosive return of repressed fears of mortality—remained intact, but this small, compact novel was written in a tight, sparse phrasing that, instead of covering vast expanses of space and time, preferred to seek the intimate infinities of various nutshells (an empty house, a body) and the eternities of single moments. It was hard to tell if DeLillo was simply regathering his energy and strength for another massive work, or shifting focus in his wintry age, but either way the future looked promising.

Something else, much less important, also happened after *Underworld*. The critics began slamming DeLillo, pretty much for the same reasons they had championed him. His voice went from "distinctive" to "too distinctive," too stylized and far removed for the rest of us humans to relate to. Instead of zany and darkly comic, his novels were now considered spasmodically predictable and inscrutable. His "postmodern" concerns with theory and cultural analysis over the old standbys of plot and character no longer were viewed as taking the novel to places it had never been before, but instead as false leads, tactics that, in fact, could "threaten the existence of the novel form," in the words of estimable DeLillo basher James Wood.

These arguments were trotted out in a variety of publications, with varying degrees of skill and acumen. My personal favorite was a 2002 *New Republic* piece by a novelist called Dale Peck. Though supposedly a review of Rick

Moody's memoir *The Black Veil*, Peck used the opportunity to bemoan what he considered to be the wrong-headed turn of modern literature, not just in its present day practitioners like DeLillo and Pynchon, but even in their direct predecessors, Joyce and Nabokov. While castigating DeLillo's work as a collection of "stupid—just plain stupid—tomes," Peck, in order to give his argument some type of historical significance and consistency, also needed to disparage everything that Joyce wrote after the first half of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. And thus, without quoting from the book once, Dale Peck—Dale Peck!—dismissed *Ulysses* as a mere "diarrheic flow of words."

Now, admittedly, I've never read any Dale Peck, but I have read *Ulysses*. What frustrates us in that book is that which we cannot fully hope to control. The human mind yearns for a way of thinking—so easily amenable to a totalitarian slippery slope—that can take in everything, rationalize, justify. When artists like Joyce or Pynchon or DeLillo frustrate these impulses, they are not simply being cute or clever; they are pointing to the wall of finite

reality, the physical limitations our "emanipated" minds fail to see.

For this reason, I cannot tell you what *Cosmopolis* is. But I can tell you what it isn't. It's not the "major dud" declared by Michiko Kakutani, and it's definitely not, in the words of James Wood, a "conventionally mapped" tale of "redemption" in which Eric Packer begins wrapped in a "dim, matutinal confidence" and "ends it chastened, suddenly penniless and eager to change."

"Eager to change?" Hardly. *Cosmopolis*' second to last paragraph reads: "Maybe he didn't want that life after all, starting over broke, hailing a cab in a busy intersection filled with jockeying junior executives, arms aloft, bodies smartly spinning to cover every compass point." Rather than following Wood's "conventionally mapped" analysis of a "redemption" nowhere to be found in *Cosmopolis*, Eric strikes his own unique chord, staying unapologetically, and frustratingly, all too human.

Try as we might, we can't fit him into any of our ready-made notions of what he should be. Like his creator, he's something else entirely. ■

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Dear Mr. Vonnegut,

The American people are not stupid. Yet polls tell us that large numbers of them believe that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the 9/11

tragedy, and that many or all of the hijackers were Iraqi. We know that the invasion of Iraq became part of the "war on terror" on the most tenuous of speculative grounds. We know that critical analysis and the right to dissent has atrophied to a point where it's merely "you're for us or agin' us."

What has gone wrong? How can people with so many historical lessons at their disposal be so easily led, so quick to follow?

I am not anti-American; I am sad for Americans. I am confused and distressed that the country seems to have gone off the rails so badly.

Mike Bromm
Vancouver, British Columbia

Dear Mike,

Oddly enough, I find myself wondering about the same thing.

My guess is that most Americans feel so powerless they might as well be living under an army of occupation that controls the schools and communications. They might as well be Poles after the Nazis came or after the Communists came. They keep their mouths shut and appear to agree with whatever the occupying power says the truth is.

I could be wrong. That's just a shot in the dark. How goes it in Canada? Please stop sending us your weather!

Kurt

Was the plot so thin and obvious to the people during earlier wars—Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Panama, etc.? Did people actually see through the proposed agenda of freedom, etc., back then? It is obvious now that things are not what they seem, but has it always been so obvious? Were the politicians of the past so obviously the stuffed shirts and corporate fronts back then as they are now?

Thom Geer
Eindhoven, Netherlands

Dear Thom,

Not quite. My friend Ken Coates, chairman of the Bertrand Russell Peace Founda-

tion, faxed to me the other day: "The war is even worse than we imagined, because the very fact that it is so universally opposed increases the volume of self-deception necessary among its supporters. I don't think I ever encountered more lies at one time, and greater disregard for their consistency over short periods."

TV, which is our major corporations and life itself, does not care, nor even seems to notice.

Kurt

Have you got any advice, as a survivor of "friendly fire" in Dresden, for those British soldiers and journalists who had to risk their lives every day wandering into the range of "hi-tech" American weaponry? Just the other day another reporter was shot by a G.I. So it goes, I suppose.

Tom Allen
Bristol, England

Dear Tom,

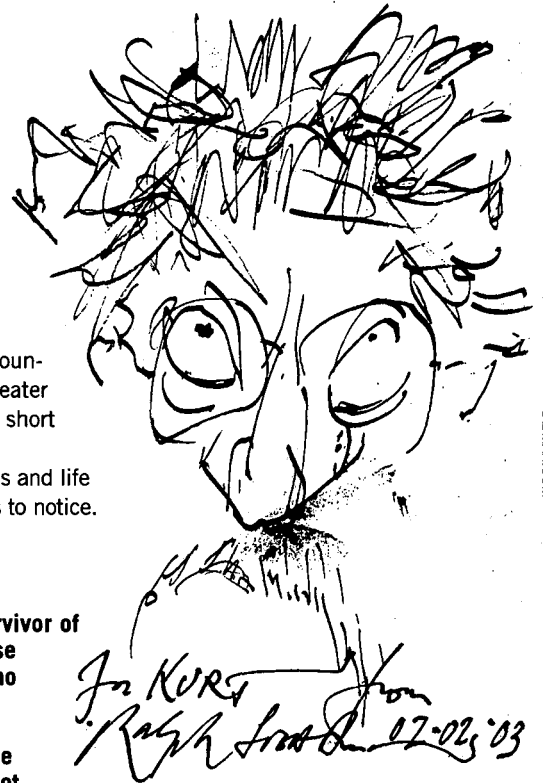
Oh yeah? Well it wouldn't surprise me, and it shouldn't surprise you either, if tomorrow some Tommy Atkins in Iraq blows away a girl reporter from the *Christian Science Monitor*. You are the mothers who firebombed me in Dresden, and now your prime minister, by joining him, has given George W. Bush permission to rock the hell out of the Cradle of Civilization in Mesopotamia. I could carve a better man out of a banana!

Although not a reporter, I wish I had been killed in the D-Day landings, so everybody would approve of me.

Kurt

I imagine many people have asked this already, but, as a follower of your work, I really would like to see another novel, which you've said won't happen.

Sean Wilson
Hamilton, Ontario



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Dear Sean,

Seated at my Apple iBook every morning, weary and ill at ease, I let my fingers wander idly over the lettered keys, searching for the Lost Chord. But all that comes out is stuff like, "Our planet's immune system is trying to get rid of us." And, "Please, Mr. Darwin, couldn't I have been a giraffe or a seagull instead?" And, "If we use DNA technology to find out who is really in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, will we have to kick him out?" And, "There's good news and there's bad news. The bad news is that Martians have landed in New York City. The good news is that they only eat homeless men, women and children, and they pee gasoline." And, "The most dangerous and addictive drug of all is petroleum, and we have killed the planet with transportation whoopee." And, "A young woman said to me the other day that she had never seen a dead person, and I told her, 'One must be patient.'"

Kurt

Got a question for Mr. Vonnegut? Write to vonnegut@inthesetimes.com.

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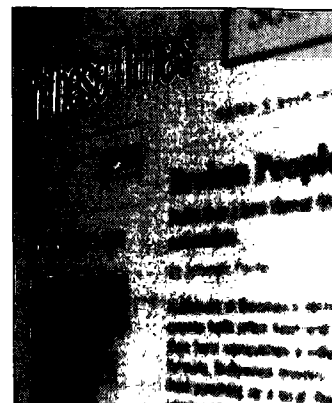
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In Memoriam Julius Jacobson (1922-2003)

The editorial board of *New Politics* mourns the March 8 passing of Julius Jacobson, the magazine's founding and longtime editor. He will be missed by all supporters of the democratic socialist left.

A memorial meeting will be held on Sunday, April 27, 12:00 noon at the Cantor Film Center Auditorium, 36 East 8th Street, New York, NY. Memorial donations in Julius Jacobson's name may be made to *New Politics*, PO Box 98, Brooklyn, NY 11231.



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International Relations from South End Press

Pirates and Emperors, Old and New International Terrorism in the Real World

Noam Chomsky

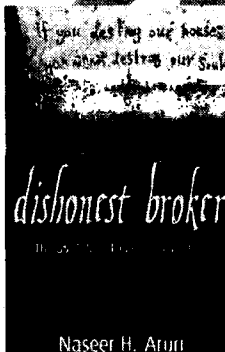
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In this new and expanded edition Noam Chomsky explores the role of the U.S. in the Middle East, and reveals how the media are used to manipulate public opinion about what constitutes "terrorism." With several new chapters addressing the second Intifada and U.S. policy in the Middle East, *Pirates and Emperors* is a brilliant account of the workings of state terrorism by the world's foremost critic of U.S. terrorism.

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Naseer H. Aruri



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Continued from back cover

were coming to the school play. "They're not welcome here," said the molder of young minds.

Another relative tells me of a school board decision to cancel a civics event that was proposing to have a moment of silence for those who have died in the war, because the students were including dead Iraqi civilians in their silent prayer. A teacher in another nephew's school is fired for wearing a T-shirt with a peace sign on it. And a friend of the family tells of listening to the radio down South as the talk radio host calls for the murder of a prominent anti-war activist.

Death threats have appeared on other prominent peaceniks' doorsteps for their views against the war. Relatives of ours have received threatening e-mails and phone calls. My 13-year-old boy, who has done nothing to anybody, has been embarrassed and humiliated by a sadistic creep who writes, or rather, scratches, his column with his fingers in the dirt.

Susan and I have been listed as traitors, as supporters of Saddam, and various other epithets by the Aussie gossip rags masquerading as newspapers and by their "fair and balanced" electronic media cousin, 19th Century Fox. (Apologies to Gore Vidal.) Two weeks ago, the United Way canceled Susan's appearance at a conference on women's leadership, and last week both of us were told that both we and the First Amendment were not welcome at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

A famous rock 'n' roller called me last week to thank me for speaking out against the war, only to go on to tell me that he could not speak himself because he fears repercussions from Clear Channel. "They promote our concert appearances," he said. "They own most of the stations that play our music. I can't come out against this war." And here in Washington, [veteran White House correspondent] Helen Thomas finds herself banished to the back of the room and uncalled on after asking Ari Fleischer whether our showing prisoners of war at Guantanamo Bay on television violated the Geneva Convention.

A chill wind is blowing in this nation. A message is being sent through the White House and its allies in talk radio and Clear Channel and Cooperstown. "If you oppose this administration, there can and will be ramifications." Every day, the airwaves are filled with warnings, veiled and unveiled threats, spewed invective and hatred directed at any voice of dissent. And the public, like so many relatives and friends that I saw this weekend, sit in mute opposition and in fear.

I'm sick of hearing about Hollywood being against the war. Hollywood's heavy hitters, the real power brokers and cover-of-the-magazine stars, have been largely silent on this issue. But Hollywood, the concept, has always been a popular target.

I remember when the Columbine high school shootings happened, President Clinton criticized Hollywood for contributing to this terrible tragedy. This as we were dropping bombs over Kosovo. Could the violent actions of our leaders contribute somewhat to the violent fantasies our teen-agers are having? Or is it all just Hollywood and rock 'n' roll?

I remember reading at the time that one of the shooters had tried to enlist to fight the real war a week before he acted out his war in real life at Columbine. I talked about this in the press at the time, and curiously no one accused me of being unpatriotic for criticizing Clinton. In fact, the same talk-radio patriots who call us traitors today engaged in daily personal

attacks on their president during the war in Kosovo.

Today, prominent politicians who have decried violence in movies recently voted to give our current president the power to unleash real violence in our current war. They want us to stop the fictional violence but are OK with the real kind. And these same people that tolerate the real violence of war don't want to see the result of it on the nightly news. Unlike the rest of the world, our news coverage of this war remains sanitized, without a glimpse of the blood and gore inflicted upon our soldiers or the women and children in Iraq. Violence as a concept, an abstraction.

It's very strange. As we applaud the hard-edged realism of the opening battle scene of *Saving Private Ryan*, we cringe at the thought of seeing the same on the nightly news. We are told it would be pornographic. We want no part of reality in real life. We demand that war be painstakingly realized on the screen but that war remain imagined and conceptualized in real life.

And in the midst of all this madness, where is the political opposition? Where have all the Democrats gone? Long time passing, long time ago? We need leaders who understand the Constitution—congressmen who don't, in a moment of fear, abdicate their most important power, the right to declare war, to the executive branch. And please, can we stop the congressional sing-alongs?

In this time when a citizenry applauds the liberation of a country as it lives in fear of its own freedom, when an administration official releases an attack ad questioning the patriotism of a legless Vietnam veteran running for Congress, when people all over the country fear reprisal if they use their right to free speech, it is time to get angry. It is time to get fierce. It doesn't take much to shift the tide. My 11-year-old nephew, mentioned earlier, a shy kid who never talks in class, stood up to his history teacher who was questioning Susan's patriotism.

"That's my aunt you're talking about. Stop it!" And the stunned teacher backtracked and began stammering compliments in embarrassment.

Sportswriters across the country reacted with such overwhelming fury at the Hall of Fame that the president of the Hall admitted he made a mistake, and Major League Baseball disavowed any connection to his actions. A bully can be stopped. So can a mob. It takes one person with courage and a resolute voice. The journalists in this country can battle back at those who would rewrite our Constitution with the PATRIOT Act II—or Patriot, The Sequel, as we would call it in Hollywood. We are counting on you to star in that movie.

This is your time and the destiny you have chosen. We lay the continuance of our democracy on your desks and count on your pens to be mightier. Millions are watching and waiting in mute frustration and hope. Hoping for someone to defend the spirit and letter of our Constitution and to defy the intimidation that is visited upon us daily in the name of national security and warped notions of patriotism.

These are challenging times. There is a wave of hate that seeks to divide us, right and left, pro-war and anti-war. In the name of my 11-year-old nephew and all the other unreported victims of this hostile and unproductive environment of fear, let us try to find our common ground. Let us celebrate this grand and glorious experiment that has survived for 227 years. To do so, we must honor and fight vigilantly for the things that unite us. Like freedom, the First Amendment and, yes, baseball. ■

Countering a Wave of Hate

BY TIM ROBBINS

After Baseball Hall of Fame President Dale Petroskey canceled the 15th anniversary celebration for the baseball movie Bull Durham, which stars the vocally anti-war actors Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon, Robbins replied with an address, excerpted below, to the National Press Club.

I had originally been asked here to talk about the war and our current political situation, but I have instead chosen to hijack this opportunity and talk about baseball and show business. Just kidding. Sort of.

I can't tell you how moved I have been at the overwhelming support I have received from newspapers throughout the country these past few days. I hold no illusions that all of these journalists agree with my views against the war. The journalists' outrage at the cancellation of our appearance in Cooperstown is not about my views; it is about my right to express these views. I am extremely grateful that there are those of you out there still with a fierce belief in constitutionally guaranteed rights. We need you, the press, now more than ever. This is a crucial moment for all of us.

For all the ugliness and tragedy of 9/11, there was a brief period afterward where I held a great hope. In the midst of the tears and shocked faces of New Yorkers, in the midst of the lethal air we breathed as we worked at Ground Zero, in the midst of my children's terror at being so close to this crime against humanity, in the midst of all of this I held onto a glimmer of hope in the naive assumption that something good could come out of all this. I imagined our leaders seizing upon this moment of unity in America, this moment when no one wanted to talk about Democrat vs. Republican, white vs. black or any of the other ridiculous divisions that dominate our public discourse.

I imagined leadership that would take this incredible energy, this generosity of spirit, and create a new unity in America born out of the chaos and tragedy of 9/11. A new unity that would send

a message to terrorists everywhere: If you attack us, we will become stronger, cleaner, better educated, more unified. You will strengthen our commitment to justice and democracy by your inhumane attacks on us. Like a phoenix out of the fire, we will be reborn.

And then came the speech. "You are either with us or against us." And the bombing began. And the old paradigm was restored as our leader encouraged us to show our patriotism by shopping and by volunteering to join groups that would turn in their neighbor for any suspicious behavior.

In the 19 months since 9/11, we have seen our democracy compromised by fear and hatred. Basic inalienable rights, due process, the sanctity of the home have been quickly compromised in a climate of fear. A unified American public has grown bitterly divided, and a world population that had profound sympathy and support for us has grown contemptuous and distrustful, viewing us as we once viewed the Soviet Union, as a rogue state.

This past weekend, Susan and I and the three kids went to Florida for a family reunion of sorts. Amidst the alcohol and the dancing and the sugar-rushing children there was, of course, talk of the war. The most frightening thing about the weekend was the amount of times we were thanked for speaking out against the war because that individual speaking thought it unsafe to do so in their own community, in their own life. "Keep talking. I haven't been able to open my mouth."

A relative tells me that a history teacher told his 11-year-old son, my nephew, that Susan Sarandon is endangering the troops by her opposition to the war. Another teacher in a different school asks our niece if we

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